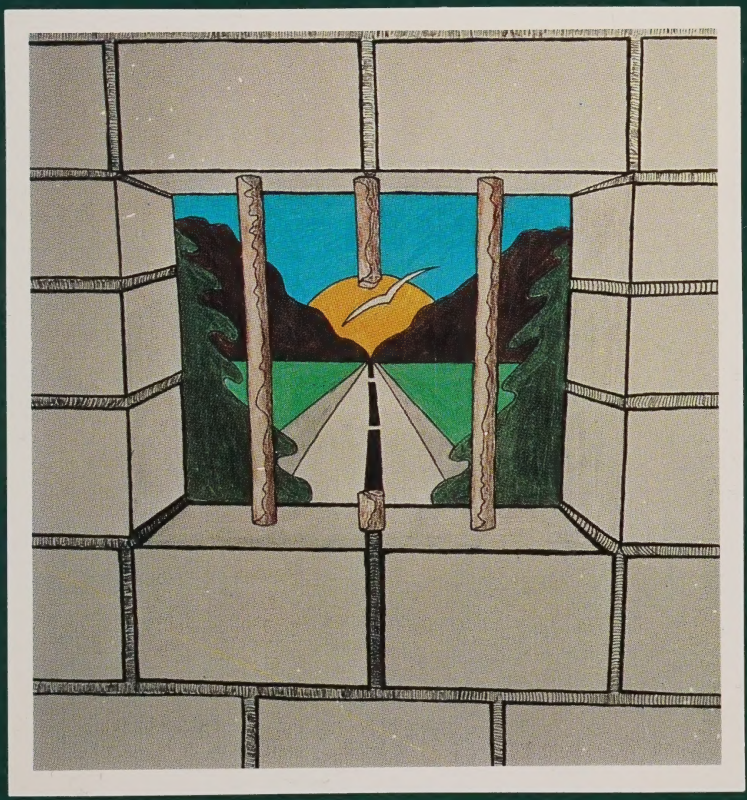
PRISON JOURNAL

No. 6

January 1987



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PRISON JOURNAL No6

January 1987

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Prison Journal

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This number of the **Prison Journal** is published jointly by the Institute for the Humanities and the Prison Education Program at Simon Fraser University. The Institute for the Humanities is a teaching and research program devoted to the exploration and dissemination of traditional and modern approaches to the study of the Humanities. It is dedicated to seeking out those critical perspectives that join social concerns with the cultural and historical legacy of the Humanities. For further information on the Institute's publication, research, and public programs, please write to: The Director, Institute for the Humanities, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C.V5A 1S6.

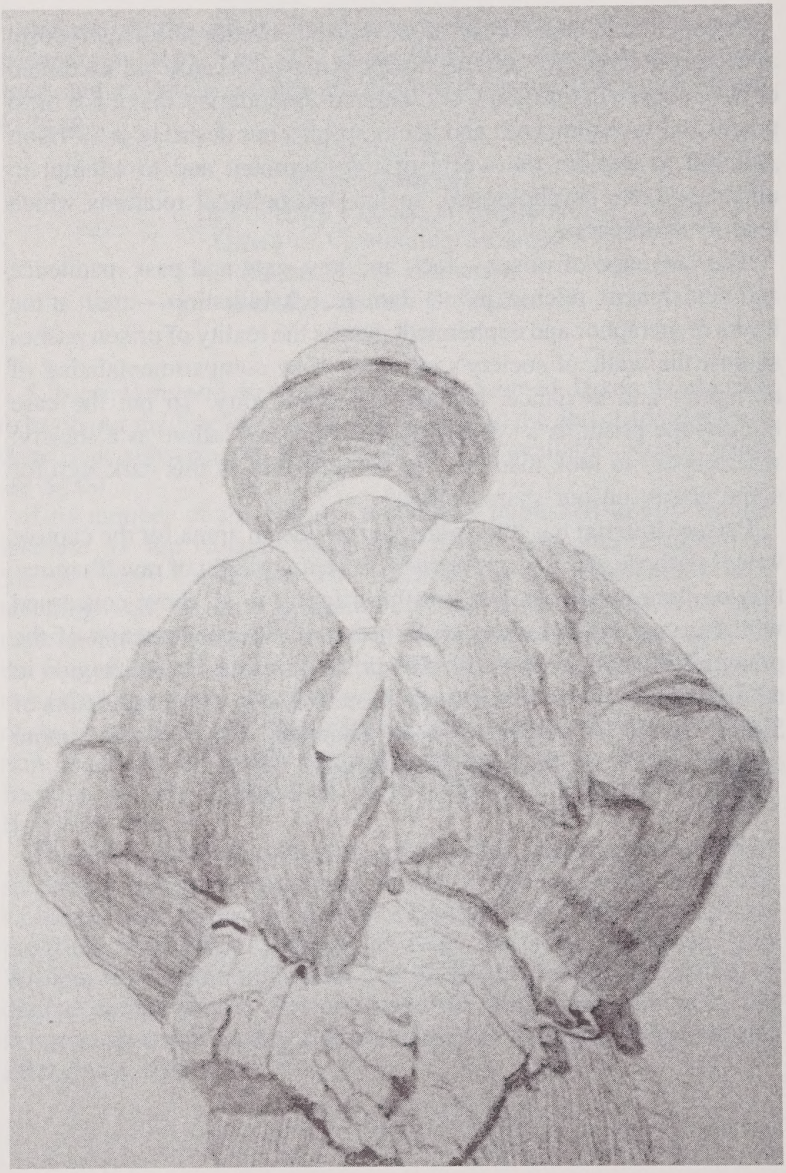
The Prison Education Program oversees the administration of post-secondary education programs in four Federal prisons in British Columbia and carries on an active research and community affairs program. The SFU Programs at Kent, Matsqui, Mountain, and William Head Institutions offer courses in the Liberal Arts leading to degree completion in several academic disciplines. As well, the Program sponsors courses and workshops in Writing and the Fine and Performing Arts.

Ethos

Prison, like so many other of our social institutions, is a microcosm of society at large. We believe, no doubt in part because we are forced or have chosen to live and work within its boundaries, that it is a most potent and revealing one; and hence springs our desire to use **Prison Journal** to explore the world of imprisonment and to attempt to understand the psychological, social, and political relations which lead to its impasse.

The language of prison—lock and key, gate and pass, penitence and punishment, release, parole, inmate, rehabilitation—strain at the limits of metaphor and euphemism, just as the reality of prison pushes against the walls of society's often too easy compartmentalizing of normality and deviance, legality and criminality. To put the case bluntly, the prison is a symbol of our collective failure as a society: where better to look than into the complexities of this dark sign for some clarity on our shared plight?

Prison Journal has three aims: to provide an arena for the captive voices of those who are imprisoned, to be a spotlight of raw illumination on their condition, and to offer a forum to all those concerned with carrying out a serious examination of the phenomenon of the prison. **Prison Journal** is edited by prisoners of the Pacific Region in the Canadian Federal Penitentiary System and by the coordinators of Simon Fraser University's Prison Education Program. We invite contributions from prisoners everywhere.



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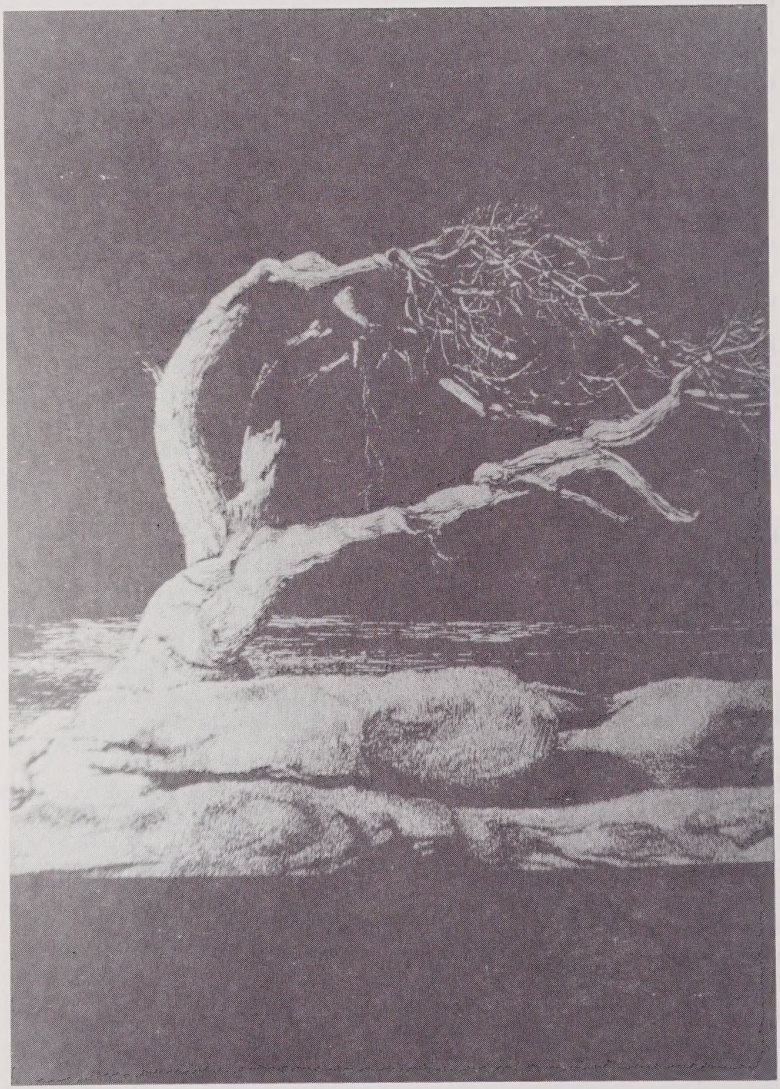

EDITORIAL

Psychology and the Prisoner

Why is this issue of **Prison Journal** focussing on psychology, you might ask?—a subject which, to borrow Graham Greene's apt dismissal of a related "-ology," "thrives on banalities and abstract jargon." The reader may rest assured that at least we will avoid the academic and doctrinaire, steer clear of theoretical pronouncements, resist statistics, and hence fail signally to come to any reductive conclusions. Mercifully, we take a literary stance: which is to say that our concern is with the individual response, the record of the feeling and thinking individual heart and mind, and not with random samples, norms, standard deviations and the like. This literary record, we feel, provides the raw ingredients out of which any number of psychological explanations can be concocted (theorizing, in this sense, is precooked)—and we prefer to serve our dish raw.

Psychology is not as dominant a force in the prison as it was a decade or two ago when the so-called "medical model" held sway in correctional philosophy and practice. Yet a traditional psychological explanation of crime and treatment still exerts powerful pressures on the lives of most prisoners and determines many of the procedures they must follow during their incarceration. For one thing, the psychology-derived nomenclature of prison is still intact (prisoners are "inmates," prisons are "institutions," Classification Officers are "Case Management Officers"); and although the content of such designations has tended to evaporate in a climate currently auspicious to "opportunity," "incentive" and "life-skills" models of correctional practice, prisoners must go through the rituals of psychological testing, interviews with the prison psychologist and, in some cases, more rigorous and long-term psychological assessments. In fact, for many prisoners, such procedures are prerequisites for transfers to lower levels of security on the way to eventual release.

The subjects of our interviews, which have been assigned centre stage once again in our publication, are three men who are all serving long sentences and who have all gone through the gamut of psychological assessment during their incarceration. In particular, each has recently experienced extensive examination during his participation in the Violent Offenders Program at the Regional Psychiatric Centre (RPC) within the Matsqui Complex in Abbotsford,

B.C. We chose these men because they were articulate and because they were willing, no doubt for various reasons, to share their insights into their experience with us. Our choice seems to us indeed fortuitous, in that we managed to get a wider range and variety of response than we had either hoped for or thought possible.

This variety is instructive in its own right, but we trust that it might also serve as evidence that we didn't allow some bias to determine who we would interview. It should go without saying (but it just possibly, won't) that these interviews, taken singly or together, are not proffered as a definitive evaluation of psychological treatment programs. They are personal records, individual responses—and therein lies their value. Since the heart of any psychological understanding lies within the complexities of the individual's experience, perception, motivation, emotion and understanding, we thought it important to set out some evidence of these complexities through three men's reflections on their experience.The result provides insight for our readers—prisoners, lay people, and professionals alike—into the daunting obstacles such programs face, where their chances of success may lie, and into the larger problem of the ultimate value of these programs within a humane penitentiary system.

As for the remainder of **Prison Journal No. 6**—the fiction, poems, essays and reviews—it was not our intent to make our focus on psychology in the prison a constraining theme for our contributors. Perhaps we didn't need to worry. The stories writers tell, the poems they write and the ideas they express are psychologically revelatory whether or not the writer makes such revelation his or her deliberate aim. When we solicited manuscripts we made our interest in psychology known, but it was clearly not taken as a directive that would fetter creativity. The many contributors who submitted unsolicited manuscripts were of course unaware of our idea. In any case, all the contributions seem to us to work together in providing a valuable examination of the psychology of prisoners and prisons.

We take great pleasure in again publishing the strong writings of Misters Abbott, Kaplinowski, Reid, and Worobets. We are equally gratified by the number and strength of new contributors. The fact that new voices outnumber the old seems to us a very positive sign, as do the many letters of praise and support we have received over the past year. A continuing growth in our list of subscribers wouldn't dampen our enthusiasm either ....

Tom Grieve

Gary Heads Out

"Hey Slim. Have you got a carton I can borrow? Till tomorrow. You know I've got this trip happening but I need a carton right now to get my gold chain back from this guy. Hey, it's seven grams of 14K. I don't want to lose it. I'll get it right back to you no problem. You can spare it. I know you can. Look buddy, I never forget someone who helps me out. You know one hand greases the other."

Gary slid down to Slim's cell and slipped the carton into his parka pocket. "Hey thanks buddy. You saved me a lot of hassle. Tomorrow, as soon as canteen opens, you'll have it back." Gary smiled and hurried off to pack the rest of his stuff for the trip down to A&D. He was getting transferred to Mission that afternoon.

On the bus ride over he chatted with the escorting bulls. "I'm glad to be out of that hole. Those fucking guys are crazy. Stabbing each other for a few bucks. It's that maximum attitude. I never should have been sent there in the first place. This is my first Federal bit. Some of those guys have been there twenty years. Can you imagine how that fries their heads! I hear this Mission is a good joint. What do you guys think?"

One old screw liked to talk when they drove the route. "Oh Mission is a quiet place. Not like the old BC Pen. I worked there almost twenty years. We don't have any trouble here. You can talk to staff. Inmates have told me that they prefer the relaxed atmosphere."

Gary settled back and enjoyed the moving scenery. Mission would suit him fine. This was just like a movie and he was the star. They wheeled through the prison gates and he carried his stuff into Admissions and Discharge. There were boxes stacked up in the narrow hallway and he piled his boxes up beside them. The place looked like it was quite busy. The prim A&D officer took his time cataloguing, in triplicate, every sock and cassette tape and T-shirt in Gary's box. That gave Gary time to look around more carefully. He noticed the edge of a sleeve of a black shirt poking out where the box flaps had been taped shut. When the bull went back into the cage to store Gary's effects, Gary leaned down and tugged at the sleeve. The tape started to screech, so he coughed and gave the sleeve a final tug. It slid out smoothly and he balled it up and shoved it down his pants, just like he used to do at Eaton's. Gary got caught smiling to himself when the bull returned. Gary answered quickly, "Oh I'm glad to

finally be in an institution that can really help me." He almost rubbed his hands with glee because he was already ahead and he'd only been at Mission for five minutes. It was going to be Attila the Hun sweeping down on the sheep again. He thought he could put a face on the name on the box, but who gave a fuck, the guy could just hassle the bulls about it. Gary put his chest into his shoulders as he walked down to induction with the LU [1] to get his cell squared away.

He heard that induction was double celled, so he was mentally ready to bunk with another prisoner. No. 7. The door was open and a slender young guy was writing a letter beneath a poster of Jesus that read "And he forgave us for our sins." Must be a skinner, [2] thought Gary, this should be easy. The LU left to write more reports and the inmate got up hastily to move out of the way when Gary strode in, chest out and declared, "I just came in from the max." He scowled and bumped the Christian with his box. Just to create the right first impression. Now that he was convinced that this weak sister was no threat, Gary smiled and got into a conversation with Calvin, which was his cellmate's name, about the daily routine, chowtime, laundry, etc. One thing led to another and pretty soon—Gary was a good listener but the meter was always running—Calvin was telling him his life story: how he came from Smithers, B.C.; this was his first time; he'd only been at Mission for two weeks; that he knew nobody; that his girlfriend loved him but she lived too far away to visit so she wrote him a ten page letter twice a week and he matched her page for page. Gary smiled sweetly through this and only interrupted Calvin to bum another cigarette, and a light, and a cup of coffee and his chips. When Gary had the full measure of the man, he told Calvin that he'd show him the ropes about doing time only right now he was a little short of canteen so did Calvin have any money left on his canteen card. And Calvin had half a carton so Gary took that graciously, and went out to tour the other units looking for who was here and how would they remember him.

And there was the Doc making toast in the next unit over. They had been on different ranges at Oakalla but he'd listened to the Doc ramble on about special high powered acids that would eat right through safe walls and hi-tech locksmithing equipment that could open any door in existence and so on. Gary also knew that the Doc smoked a lot of pot.

"Hey, how you doing Doc? I'm just over from the max today, ya, I really didn't want to leave, fucking good bunch of guys, don't know if I'll be able to handle this Mission action, but as they say, a change is

[1] Living Unit (a.k.a., cell block) Officer—*Ed.*

[2] Inmate with sexual offence conviction—*Ed.*

as good as a rest. And I may be able to get something out of them. A pass would be good." He winked at Doc, "But hey, I sure could use a toke, I'm all wound up from packing and travelling, and those assholes gave me a hard time on the ride over. You got anything?"

And it happened that the Doc was putting out a little hash, so they went to his cell and he toked Gary up. "Right on, buddy. Fuck, I needed that. Hey did I tell you that my old lady got a steady strip of Talwins and Vs. Ya, she brought me a hundred, a couple of weeks back, at the max. Was I boxed! I'm waiting on something to happen right now. As soon as she gets cleared. But that will take a couple of weeks. Think you could front me a couple of grams until then? Hey, I heard the merchants here have been getting a sawbuck a piece for Talwins. Outrageous, eh? Well, I'll get a couple of hundred and then we'll knock the prices down." In the haze of smoke even the Doctor wasn't beyond a little dreaming. Out came his stash and he gave Gary a couple of grams of Leb Red, leaving the bit unsaid about how he'd like some pills himself and when would he get paid back. Gary moved out fast while the glow was still in the fire; the only "old lady" Gary had visiting him was really old and a Christian from Agassiz who had once brought ten dollars and then shied away from bringing anything else, saying that if he'd only open his soul to Jesus all his needs would be fulfilled. He hadn't been doing enough time to pick up the Bible.

With his newly acquired stash in hand, Gary went out to make some friends. First stop the weight pit to scan the muscle: Gary liked to be seen with the big, tough hombres, with the tattoos and the murder-one stares, guys that weren't too bright and liked their tokes. In a couple of days he'd gone through the first gram, in one cell and then another, talking who got shanked at the max, cracking the never-miss jokes about all the water sloshing around Mission, being a pal. It didn't take long; by the third day he had a seat at a solid table and was gunning off the PCs [3] with the best of them. Nothing like covering your back, because when you played like Gary did, it had best be covered. But he saw pretty quickly that that wouldn't be a problem at the old Mission.

Back in the double cell Gary had taken the lower bunk and had discovered that Calvin had a per for Darvons from the croaker. After a few lurid tales about how PCs who got found out fared in population at the max, Calvin was tonguing the pills and giving them to Gary. Too bad this goof doesn't have a colour TV, he thought, but then again you can't expect apples to be falling out of orange trees; you got to move around the orchard if you want to taste all the fruit. Gary sold the shirt to an Indian kid next door for half a carton, while he kept a mental inventory of everything that Calvin had which still might be of

[3] Protective Custody Inmate—*Ed.*

some later value: Gary felt it was a personal defeat if he ever had to spend any of his own canteen on anything. He had this dream about saving enough money in his joint account to buy a MAK-l0 machine gun like the one that he'd once been shown in a bar washroom when he'd been on the street. The guy had wanted $1500 for it and five clips. Gary wasn't going to get out again like he had from Westgate, with nothing but his clothes and a joint jacket. Shit, he'd had to kick in a church to get enough bread for a meal.

No time to be sitting still and Gary never did. Down in the gym he noticed that they hadn't locked one of the side doors after some meeting or social or something. He slipped in later with some tools while the slack rec bull was watching videos, and closed it behind him. My, oh, my. A new tapedeck with speakers sat right in the middle of the long brown table, just like a nest of unguarded eggs. Gary felt a familiar thrill ripple down his spine as he got down to it, peeling the guts of the tapedeck to strip out the motor for a tatty gun and tearing the speakers out of their cabinets. His thoughts raced on: I can piece off that long haired goof who does wood hobby, Jeez I don't even have to give him a piece, just smoke some with him; he'll make the new cabinets. The tatty gun goes to Breezer, probably get a sawbuck cash out of him. It was all under his parka and down into the units inside of ten minutes; of course he didn't waste his time unattaching everything; he used the screwdriver more like a prybar and the deck was completely trashed when he was finished.

Later, the next day at lunch, he heard some guy at the table nearest the window who was on the Inmate Committee complaining about how some punks had destroyed the Committee sound system. Gary didn't give a shit; Mission is full of PCs anyway; they could always buy a new one. Gary didn't think much of inmate committees, they're just in it for the paycheque, he thought, so why all the snivelling.

Weeks passed and Gary settled into the pace of Mission life. The big hurdle everyone had told him about was getting a job: if you didn't, they'd shunt you down to the factory to hammer out monotainers. No way Jose. Between slipping and sliding with the cons, Gary camped out in the LUs' office. He'd sit on their desk and chat about prison, fishing, the Lions' game, anything to get them to see that he was just a regular guy, caught up in a bad situation. He told them the old story about working night shift at the mill and then discovering that his old lady was going out with other guys so he had to quit work to keep their marriage straight and take care of the kids, only the bills snowed them under and she gave him a hard time so he started taking drugs to mellow out and then Christmas came and there was no money for presents for the kids so he had to get some cash someplace and his Dad had left him this shotgun so on Christmas Eve

he went out but he never hurt anyone because it wasn't even loaded ... etc. Gary himself was really tired of spinning this yarn but he had to tell it exactly the same each time so that when the LUs compared notes they wouldn't catch him out on any contradictions. But he was so practised at it by now that the words slipped out smooth as margarine. Inside of a week he was employed helping with odd jobs in the unit; was on a first name basis with every LU, the old or the fat, bible thumper or social worker, Gary had a ready smile and a rap for each and every one. And all these guys who whined about the LU system at Mission, they just didn't know how to get along with people. When the administration announced the introduction of the fast track program, it was only natural that the Living Unit team recommended Gary as a candidate. After all he was a first offender, young and co-operative. Fitted the profile, didn't he?

But the day-to-day had to be dealt with too. Gary got to see who had substance and who was just on the bum. The second gram he sowed midst the guys who had bread, connections, visits, and who looked to be able to do him some good. In a fortnight the value of his gesture had multiplied to his credit ten times over. A carton borrowed from this guy, a sawbuck from another. He hit up everyone of them for a loan of some kind. Even the prisoner who worked all day in the computer room and had turned him down cold twice finally came off a pack of cigarettes. Maybe it was the payoff for being pestering and persistent, but better something than nothing. Gary immediately forgot the minor details like when he was supposed to pay these guys back; he had no intention to pay anyone unless the steel came out and it wouldn't at Mission. He picked his spots pretty carefully. When Gary finally moved to his own cell, along with the rest of Calvin's cigarettes, toiletries and stationery, he had half a dozen cartons, forty dollars cash and a gold chain that he had pinched off a neighbour's nightstand when the guy was in for a shower. Gary was quite the packrat when it came to anything shiny. And there was no moss growing on his rocks.

Of course as the weeks passed and the shine of his stories began to dull with wear, he did a bit of ducking and dodging but it was more out of habit than necessity. The Doc was looking a bit shook but fortunately Gary's grandmother, whose memory was going, stopped by for a visit and he was able to lay track both ways: he told Granny in his quiet but sincere little boy's voice that he was afraid for his life because prison is a dangerous place where you'd better pay your debts or someone will kill you and he had innocently borrowed five packs of cigarettes when he first arrived at Mission because he had none but he didn't know about the interest he had to pay and now he owed three cartons and they had threatened to kill him or worse. And

he gave her his saddest expression that used to work when he was eight and Granny was soft on her little darling anyway so when she came back for the afternoon visit she slipped him twenty dollars as she gave him a peck on the cheek goodbye and he gave her an affectionate hug thereafter when he had felt the paper in his hand. And he told Doc, who wouldn't know who his visit was anyway, just that he had one, that there was a little delay because the croaker who handled the pers was on holiday but it would all come together in a couple more weeks, so don't worry you'll be well taken care of can I bum a smoke Doc? Worked like a charm.

And Mission was fun but the streets were a riot and Gary never forgot that his job was to get there as soon as possible. And though the LUs bought this act he never really got the right opportunity to rub up against the parole officer who was a pretty strange character with a lisp who didn't keep regular hours but just blew in and out and started hemming and hawing about fast tracking an armed robbery case, so Gary kept his eyes and ears open because he knew that he'd have to throw some more weight on his side of the balance if his release was going to occur according to plan. The only thing was that Mission had a mixed population, even the bulls said it ran about thirty-five percent PC, so you could bet there was a line-up when it came to dropping kites. Gary left these considerations on hold and got on with his current plan of scoring a bundle of stuff.

That would be the big time. With caps of junk in hand all the players would be chasing him down. Forcing their hoarded cash into his hands; you didn't have to go out and grind, mixing gum up with hash to double the weight or give samples away. It was a matter of course that he'd short the caps, but so what, everyone did it. There would be a lot of pitches for credit, always were with sleazy dope fiends; they would try and convince him, like sending one of the street trinkets down to his cell for a little pre-negotiating oral cop. Things were looking in his imagination, but whoa, he was getting ahead of himself.

The in was one of his table pals who had an old lady on methadone. So this guy got a steady taste. Trade it, sell it, take it, give it away, he was always boxed. And with the old lady taken care of maybe she could be trusted to buy the bundles without banging the business into her arms. Gary had been bringing Rick the pal along. "Hey Rick. You're always high and so's your old lady, but you could make some bread in here. Not just sell a little here and a little there, but something steady. Shit, sell a couple of bundles and we could get an ounce. And look at all these bums you been turning on who never do dick for you. I'm business. We could take all the money in the joint. I'll handle the shit."

Rick, in his little thirties, an old prison vet, doing a twenty minimum life, was a player too. He'd been riding his bad rep around pretty tough since he picked up that murder beef; of course before that he'd been another gutter hype pimping his old lady, but there weren't too many guys around these days who remembered that Rick. Now he was a joint wheel. "How much money you got up front?" When Gary looked into Rick's bleary red eyes he saw Rick was bombed again, so he kept it simple: "Hey Rick. I'll put up a yard. You get the bundle. I'll sell the stuff. We split the take. You get paid off first. How's that?" "Sure. Just give me the bread after chow. I got a visit tonight so the thing will be back in Saturday." And that was it. Gary was taking a chance but you had to trust somebody for awhile when you're getting started. It was a chance to get ahead of the pack and get into the thousands. The yard was good faith money to show that he wasn't blowing smoke.

Gary had changed his assets into paper and his paper into a promise. And somebody up there was smiling because Rick's old lady didn't suddenly develop car trouble, or get robbed or rousted by the narcs and lose the stash; indeed it all worked out like it was supposed to, except that Saturday night, once Gary had made sure that Rick was really fixed with his chin in his chest and the outfit and a few caps were left out on the table, he took the rest of the bundle, stashed it and then went back to his unit to have a little talk with the LU2. POW! Ten minutes later the local Miami Vice team rushed into Rick's cell and pinched him cold.

Was there fallout? Sure. Gary established credibility with the administration and got cleared quietly for Ferndale Camp and was transferred ten days later. In the meantime, while he flogged the junk, he was the most popular guy in the joint. Rick got shipped back to Kent for being high, in possession and suspicion of trafficking; he had been so blasted that he hadn't a clue what happened except that his pal Gary owed him some bread. The Doc and the rest of the goofs had bulls in their cells searching for this and that as Gary packed up his boxes and moved on out.

Gary got off the truck and took a couple of deep breaths as he surveyed the woods around the trailers of the camp. No fences, no guns. An institution run on trust. When he saw an old man in a lumber jacket and jeans come out of the poolroom, he called out, "Hey partner. Have you got a smoke?"

John Abbott
Mission Prison

A Role in Darkness

The abyss of gothic prison romance
is a B-movie
starring Frankenstein, the dark and instinctive:
gravestones of
local mores tumble like trees
in the night, across his shoulders.

But he crawls out,
hunchbacked,
the mirror creature,
a survivor, who imagines his own
castle walls, those iron rings
that chafe.

You don't cry—hardened heroes never do.
You save your tears
for the heroine in the audience,
you know she's out there,
a fan for the same Saturday Matinee.

If the director would only cast you
and her,
together.

John Abbott
Mission Prison

Frame a Day

It all occurred on that particular morning, it was quite early as a matter of fact. From my bed i watched the sunbeam almost motionlessly broaden beneath my windowsill, my senses sleepily partial to this phenomenon. And then my ears became partial to the dog continuously making an ill noise outside the window where Mr. Sunbeam invited himself into my bedroom.

*

Slowly climbing out of bed, i donned my robe and walked outdoors around to the side of my house and found the mongrel, a dozy look on its face, barking at its imagination. Instantly i yelled "Shut up!" but the dog wasn't listening, so i repeated louder this time, "SHUT UP!!" but that didn't do much, so i yelled louder than before, "SHUT THE HELL UP!!!!" but the dog was short of mentality and didn't take heed to my warning, so reaching down to the side of my house, my hand gripped around a scrap piece of two by four, which i brought to the dog's head.

Then the mongrel listened, it was very quiet.

*

Trudging back to my humble abode, i flopped back into bed and ditto dreamland, but my doorbell Rang and RAng and RANg and RANG bringing me to rise from the tranquillity of rest. Peering out my front window through a crack in the drapes, my eyes focused on an ugly, fat-faced bitch with an evil look in her eyes.

*

Swinging open my front door, almost instantly my ears caught a flood of threats, insults and foul language. I didn't like it so i slammed the door in her face. Walking down the hallway to my semi-lit bedroom, the increased tempo of doorbell ringing halted me in my tracks.

Swinging around, my pace quickened towards the door. Annoyed i opened it and mixed the four letter word with another and slammed the door in her face a bit harder this time, but the annoyance started to ruin the expensive finish on my oak panel door by kicking it quite violently.

*

The gun felt nice and balanced in my right hand. Swinging the door wide open on its creaky hinges, my gun and i both gave her a piece of our minds. She was very good about it after that. She went to sleep right on my doorstep.

Yawning, i headed down my hallway back to misty dreamland. I had only acquired a minor amount of winks, when i was awakened by an anticipating knock at my front door. "The Bitch Must Have Insomnia," i thought.

*

Opening the door i was met by a whole bunch of the men in code, some laying on the front lawn relaxing, some skulking behind my hedges and quite a few sunday driving down the street, and there was two of them in front of me with sunglasses and really nice guns in their hands and i was honoured they came to visit me.

"Can i get you a coffee?" i cheerfully inquired. They both exchanged puzzled glances. Tying my hands behind me with chrome, they took me for a joyride through town to their clubhouse, but they didn't look happy and then i realized something was wrong and i was in deep trouble. "BELIEVE ME MEN IN CODE, I DIDN'T MEAN TO SHOUT AT THE LADY," and from that moment on i believed i had been FRAMED.

George L. Taylor
Stony Mountain Prison

Mailbox

Mailbox, mailbox, where art thou come from?
Did thou originate from a scrapyard?
I find thee metallic, cold and hard.

Who is the man dressed in code?
He picks your locks, haunches like a toad
he robs you of your contents
thy idiot shows no regrets
he drags thy contents to humble abodes
before thy mailbox overloads
from all the letters stamped with codes.

Poor old mailbox sitting in the rain
in subzero temperatures you end up in pain
but don't worry, they'll feed you year round
and keep you nailed to the cold, hard ground
BUT WAIT! WHAT'S THAT HORRIBLE SOUND?!
Alas, poor mailbox, you've been hit
beware of the truck with no airbrakes on it.

George L. Taylor
Stony Mountain Prison

The Happiest Man on Earth

Paul was sure that he had died and woke up in heaven. He was lying on something very comfortable, in a small room filled with a soft white light, and a smiling angel was standing at his side. Focussing his eyes, he could see nipples pushing against a white tunic. The angel was obviously a she. Paul was mesmerized by the angel's beauty but he had always expected it. What disturbed him was the room's white walls. In his imagination, heaven had always been an open space with blue horizons. Suddenly it occurred to him that maybe he had arrived in hell—a more suitable place for a great sinner like him, who, after being found guilty of murder, had been executed.

***

When a jury found Paul "guilty as charged," they recommended the ultimate penalty: elimination from society. Society had to show its determination to fight the crime epidemic which was impeding social progress. However, being civilized, humane and Western, the government had been reluctant to reinstate the death penalty; instead, it had introduced the so-called "selective elimination."

There were two types of selective elimination: irreversible and indeterminably reversible. The former type, known among criminals as the "permanent bliss," meant a straightforward lethal injection. The latter type meant an injection that put a subject into a state of suspended animation which could, at least theoretically, be reversed in the future when scientific progress would make it possible to modify the criminal's antisocial character. The process was "indeterminable" because, at the time it was introduced, nobody knew when, if at all, the reversal would be feasible. The reversible method involved preserving a criminal's inactive body in a special storage facility at a substantial cost to taxpayers. It was regarded as a privilege to be granted only in special cases when a criminal had demonstrated the potential to make some positive contribution to the future society.

Paul was chosen for the reversible elimination because of his education. A few years before his final trial, while serving time in a federal penitentiary, he graduated from a university program run inside the prison. The jurors thought there was a chance he might in the future repay his debt to society, providing he would accept at least some middle-class values suitable for a man of his education.

The elimination itself was very efficient and at least as humane as putting a dog to sleep. The last supper: chicken and ice cream. The

prison priest: nothing to say. The enema: preparation of the body for storage. The elimination room: a bed with straps, a doctor with a syringe, and some spectators behind the lexan window. No fear, not even any excitement: something must have been in the chicken or ice cream. All he felt was sadness—for being a loser and for being betrayed by those he had loved and trusted. When the liberating prick of the needle came, it brought a good feeling like falling asleep on a water bed.

***

When Paul left the Human Behaviour Laboratory (HUMBLE), he was a new man. It seemed the doctors were right when they had declared after the final tests that he had achieved almost perfect peace of mind. "You might be the happiest man on earth," they said smiling.

He did not worry anymore about anything. His life was carefully arranged. He lived in a comfortable apartment near the college campus where he was sent to update his education, mainly about computers. A generous scholarship took care of all his expenses. He did not need anything more; at least, he did not feel he needed anything.

Paul enjoyed student life. He was fifty years old but his body showed only the mileage of his active twenty-five years before the selective elimination. True, the mileage had been accumulated at rather high speeds, but he was none the worse for wear. He blended rather well with the student crowd. His mysterious inward maturity made him quite popular with coeds. The girls were too much on the gigglish side for his taste, but it did not stop him from enjoying them with the abandonment of a child left alone in a candy store. He thought that unconsciously he was trying to catch up for the lost years of his life. He realized, however, that those years were really not lost. They were still ahead of him.

His new friends did not know anything about his past. The past was to be forgotten. His own attitude about it changed completely. The past did not trigger any emotions anymore. His unpleasant memories were neutralized and rationalized. He felt that he had actually deserved all the bad things that had happened to him. He had even deserved the broken nose and ribs that the cops presented him with, seemingly without good reason, after his last arrest. He had broken some noses and ribs in the past himself. He was convinced that the universal law of action and reaction had been proven yet again by his experience.

He believed in God now. He could not resist smiling when he

recalled his disappointment after learning that the angel was a nurse and that he was not in heaven but in the Human Behaviour Laboratory. Yet the doctors made sure he found God there. The Lab's psychiatrists were satisfied when he started to believe in God in general; they did not have any preference for a particular religion. What was important was that he believed in inevitable punishment for every sin. He could choose his religion himself. Roman Catholicism was out of the question for he could not overcome his old aversion to confessions, any confessions, and the Human Behaviour Lab doctors somehow overlooked this phobia or did not consider it important enough to modify. At last, Paul decided to join a Hare Krishna group. Their concept of the natural order of life and karma seemed logical. Actually, the laws of karma corresponded closely to what the HUMBLE doctors told him. Still, he was not completely sure whether these laws applied to everybody, whether there were any exceptions. He was determined to find out before shaving his head as Hare Krishna required.

***

Paul's old friend J.J. was surprised by Paul's visit. Now he was sweating even though they were sitting in the living room of his villa with its excellent air conditioning. The house was pure luxury. The owner's wealth was written so legibly all over the place that Paul did not have to ask about J.J.'s financial success. He also did not ask about J.J.'s health. Even pale and sweating, J.J. looked well-preserved for his fifty years: no chance that a cancer was eating away at his guts. For a moment, Paul considered asking J.J. if he had had any problems with his conscience during all those years of prosperity and success. Yet he did not ask. He could guess the answer would be a pathetic lie which might make him lose his cool too soon. He was not sure how good a job the doctors from the Human Behaviour Lab had done to increase his once very limited tolerance for lies.

J.J. was the luckiest man Paul had ever known. He could never comprehend J.J.'s luck. It defied not only all laws of probability, but also seemed to challenge the higher order of the universe: the interrelation between cause and effect and man's ultimate responsibility for his actions. J.J. was so lucky that he could even get away with murder ... the one Paul had paid for.

When Paul was selected for the reversible elimination, he had the right to choose the irreversible one. He accepted the jury's recommendation for one reason only: he hoped he would return in time to be able to shoot J.J. and the woman who was now his wife.

Countless times he had rehearsed in his imagination this final

meeting with J.J. and Julia. Should he say something first or just shoot? Would they drop to their knees and beg for mercy? Should he kill them quickly or make them suffer first? There were many possibilities. Yet he knew that the scenarios of imagination rarely match the scenarios of real life. Now, as he waited for J.J.'s wife and daughter to return home, he was amazed how calm he was.

Julia recognized him as soon as she entered the room. Along with her daughter, she stopped near the door, assessing the situation. No broken glass or furniture. No blood on the carpet. But J.J. was obviously in trouble. Paul watched her face, still beautiful after so many years, turning white then red. He was astounded that this woman did not ignite any emotions in him. There was no trace of past love or hate. Just a cool curiosity.

He started to enjoy the situation. "I invited myself for a dinner without any advance warning," Paul broke the silence. "It seems that I have to introduce myself to your daughter." He looked at the faces of J.J. and Julia. Panic. "I think I might call myself an old family friend who has returned from a long journey," said Paul, smiling. "Oh, you don't look that old," answered the young woman. "I'm Gloria." She was smiling too. Gloria was even more beautiful than her mother twenty-five years ago when she had been Paul's fiancée. He had decided by now not to shave his head.

***

Gloria's wedding reflected the wealth of her parents in quality rather than pomp. Both the groom and the bride, as well as the bride's parents, agreed to have a small wedding reception. Just close family friends. The newlyweds did not care about the party. Their minds had already left for their honeymoon on a cruise ship sailing to the South Pacific. It was in the jacuzzi of their luxurious first class cabin that Gloria declared she was the happiest woman on earth. The wear and tear of honeymooning notwithstanding, Paul promptly agreed that he was the happiest man on earth too. In his mind, he was trying without success to recall where he had read that nothing was more sad than happiness which came too late—not that it mattered anymore, since he was no longer able to be sad.

W.J. Kaplinowski
Ferndale Prison

Solitary Confinement

in the greasy small hours
they creep out of the shadowed cracks
nipping and pinching
and crawling all over
slimy and frightening

carrying bravery
away
with timidity's ease
beauty
with the same disregard as plainness

hefting truth with the lightness of a lie

you never writhe your way to morning
soon enough
traveller
the whining and whimpering
choreograph themselves
with your tapping foot
changing colour
as you flood yourself
with artificial light
in make believe morning
pillow on the head for make believe night

your choirboy eyes
bright
in deadlocked pallor

i am ok ma
the food is good the people here are really great
and time is passing fast i will be home soon
it will be a fresh start in the meantime
keep an eye on joan and the kids

love ronnie

David Emmonds

Getting Ready

Chapter 7 of *Jackrabbit Parole*

This story is taken from the beginning of the book. Bobby and his gang have finished final preparations and are in a car on the way to rob the bank. Some original material edited out by Bantam, New York, has been put back in for this issue of **Prison Journal.** *When they saw the original, the Bantam editors waffled on the point of whether Boy George really was the kind of guy who "puts a dick in his mouth and says he's a man." The legal department, that great defender of tongue-lashed celebrities, decided he wasn't. As for Boy George, when asked, he said, "Poo on them silly ole bankrobbers anyway," and promptly refused us permission to quote the lyrics from one of his songs ("karma karma karmeleon, I'm a man, yes I am ... etc.").*

The **Prison Journal,** *however, decided in favour of free expression for its writers, even if it flies in the face of good taste, common sense, and even the law, and allowed the original chapter to stand as is. Not fully convinced, they nonetheless agreed that Boy George's antics did bear a certain "scrutinizing." I said I thought so too. But, because I like the guy's music so much, he gets redeemed later in the novel anyway. As for those New york lawyers who edit with their elbows—break a leg, Sidney!*

I didn't choose this chapter for the **Journal** *just to beat up on poor George O'Dowd though. I wanted it to fit in with this issue's focus on psychology. This chapter is about psychology—the psychology of four men on the final leg of a hold-up. Bobby even recalls a trip he made once to a psychologist's office back in the pen. But this chapter is classic male patterns, men in the company of other men and facing danger. There's all the machismo banter, the juicing and the jostling, but if you listen hard enough to the small silences in between, you will feel the private fear in the pit of each man's belly. The reader shouldn't have to don a white lab coat to understand the psychology here.*

Denny drove out of the Thunderbird's parking lot and eased back into the street. I was still concerned about Luc.

"The guy's got a chump complex, Denny. He's on some kind of inferiority trip."

"He's just being realistic." The world according to Denny. He had stopped for a red light between a moped and a Mercedes. The woman on the moped had a molded helmet held primly on her head with a white chin strap and was sitting there stiff, unpretentious, and functional. Looked like a prison caseworker. Probably a corporate lawyer.

The dude in the Mercedes had a perfect geometric haircut and his windows closed tightly to the world. He had corporate lawyer written all over him. Probably a cocaine dealer.

I reworked my worries. "Hey, Den. Why can't the newspapers, and the FBI and all them fucken people just leave us alone?"

"Because we steal, Bob. 'Cause we steal." His voice trailed away, then he smiled out the side of his mouth. I looked over at the little shit. He had a way of getting to the point. We had no myths and no songs—just a trunk full of masks and guns that didn't know how to say sorry.

Danny has been my Runyonesque companion and a proven friend for a long time now. Still, I'm not sure if he's a Muppet or a Russian novelist. If I were someone else I would think him weird. "You're weird, Denny."

"You're weird your own self, Bob." Great. Weird and weird. Two strange travelling companions.

The light turned green, Denny and the Mercedes left the pilgrim lady sitting at the intersection, the scooter clutched tightly between her thighs, all plastic and trembling.

He turned the corner and we slowed down to pick up Luc and Emile. I could see by the pointed finger of Emile, and Luc's dejected stance, that a one-sided dressing down was being concluded. They climbed in from opposite doors and sat slouched in the backseat like two bookends. Sullen and Surly, the bad morning brothers.

Denny started right in, fidgeting with the radio dials, using the channel selector like an assassin's dagger, slicing through the voicebox of every DJ on the air. Zap. Got that A.M. sucker in mid breath. A quick twist to the left—takes out the weatherman on 98. Zoom back across the country and western larynx. After he tired of the carnage he allowed us to listen to the headless voices. In peace. The surviving announcer introduced a song by a band called Culture Club. A bubbly sort of carefree tune filled the car. I liked it.

KARMA KARMA KAR ME LEON I'M A MAN

I was bubbling right along with the music, drumming my fingers on the dashboard. Enjoying myself. Lost.

"Guy's got a lot of balls. Sayin' something like that."

I turned to look. It was Surly. "Like what Emile?"

"Like '*I'M A MAN*'." He spoofed the song. "Imagine this bird sayin' that? I saw the fucken guy on a talkshow last night."

Emile must have been referring to Boy George, the lead singer, and the newest cultural phenomenon to visit America. I had been watching motel television late last night too.

Emile continued, "Guy's a fucken faggot ... wears earrings ... and make-up ... and, and, fucken-near a dress too."

He was talking loud, really starting to cook. "The guy puts a dick in

his mouth and now he's got the fucken moxie to say *I'M A MAN!* SACK-RAH-MEH!" Emile glared out of his window disgusted with the fate of masculinity in a world fast approaching conceptual androgyny. Boy George sang on, oblivous to Emile, oblivious to the venerations of a lot of men.

I'M A MAN OF NO CONVICTIONS

"He'd better not get no convictions in Quebec that's for fucken sure. The boys in the joint will fuck him up."

"I don't think he means those kinds of convictions Emile."

"Shut the fuck up Bobby." It seemed Emile was not about to waste his meagre store of politeness on me this morning. I backwatered. Who am I to defend Boy George anyway? I don't even know him.

"You're right Emile." It was Luc sharing his worldly wisdom with us. "All them fucken queers should be lined up and shot. Hitler had the right idea when it came to those facefucks."

Luc spat it out too quickly, a touch too viciously. He sounded more like the little "trick boy" whistling by the Lavender Street Steam Baths.

He must have figured I caught amnesia or something. I remembered him slipping furtively into the dark recesses at the end of the cellblock, a popular place for twenty minutes of coarse sweaty release with fat-butted boy-crooks. You don't got to be Sigmund Freud to figure out where Luc's attitude on homosexuality comes from. Emile wasn't aware of the "oil changes," as Luc called them, and I would leave that closet door closed this morning. This crew was already feeling more than enough strain on the buttons.

We used our key to raise the electronic door, avoiding the attendant in the booth at the other entrance. We were at the side of a multi-tiered garage. A concrete skyscraper for automobiles.

Denny and I had spent four hundred eighty dollars for a two month lease on four lines in the cement. In California even parking spaces have gone "condo." We had two spaces in one stall on the second floor, back corner. One car was there waiting. Another was up two levels in public parking. Also waiting.

The second floor was made semi-private by a concrete parapet. Made even more private when Denny set up a DO NOT ENTER sign on the way in to our corner. He bought the sign in the section of the hardware store where you get WET PAINT notices and round aluminum monograms for your front door. He attached the sign to a regulation hurdle that he picked up at a sports supply shop. It looked more impressive than the real DO NOT ENTER signs. We would only be a few minutes.

Some of Denny's props were smart. Some were unnecessary. This one bordered in between. Opening boxes and assembling the

props he dreams up is like Wile E. Coyote sorting out his weekly load of Roadrunner traps from the Acme Toy Co.

Luc was fastening a set of plates to the bankmobile (we use alligator clips—they double as roach clips on our days off). We had a big powerful car for this morning's work. A two-year-old sedan with four doors, a V-8 engine and heavy suspension. As of last month it also had a new ignition. I almost swallowed a penlight wiring it myself.

Big cars are best. More elbow room. They also cater to an inner image. Power. It's important. It's all part of the package.

Denny was shuttling the kits from our car to the bankmobile. Emile and I leaned on the fender, talking. "By the way, I'm not going to use the watch today."

"It's about time. That stopwatch stuff is about three quarters lame anyway Bob. All it's ever done is give us a new name in the papers."

"Yeah, but you know me, I like all that stuff. I like making all those gangster moves!" I joked, but Emile was right. Denny and I often over-shopped and out-thought ourselves setting up the scene. Hollywood excesses.

"Never mind running that line by me Bobby. You like exactly what I like. Counting the fucken money afterwards, and that's it!"

He made me agree with his smile. "Listen. We're playing it close going in today though, okay? I feel jammed. I don't know if it's because we been on the road so long. Or those papers got me spooked, or what?"

"You want to shut it down Bobby?" Emile asked flatly. "You been fretting and sweating all morning guy. Want to turn around?"

I took an extra moment to answer. Finally, "No. I'm all right."

"Are you sure?"

I'm never sure but I didn't say anything. I slid off the fender and walked over to put Denny's barricade away. The score wasn't going to shut down so my worries had to be. Doubt and hesitations are for regular days. The steel trays began to slam shut in my head.

Denny was fishing in his kit. The rest of us would climb into our gear enroute—Denny would get dressed to the neck now. The driver is the most vulnerable if trouble comes on a play. If it's trouble from inside and we're overpowered, he's a duck from the windows. If the cops come *during*, he is the one they come upon first. And later, if there is a pursuit, well, who would *you* aim at in a fleeing car? Some people thought driving was the easy job on a score. Denny knew better. Like a determined little Marine, he tugged tight on the velcro fasteners of the bullet-proof vest and slipped his shirt back on.

We pulled out. Luc and Emile had to jump over-under one another. Backwards bookends. They had climbed in opposite sides of where

their kits lay. Off to a choreographed start here.

We rolled down a corrugated ramp over a trip cord which opened the door automatically and disgorged us from the cavern. My eyes blinked. Adrenalin jumped out of the shadows and into the bright day, joining us.

The pace, an ordinary one, remained the same for the rest of theworld. Sidewalk traffic. Ladies in suede coats going shopping, Afghan dogs noble on their leashes, a man swinging his drycleaning, three nuns, a child pushing something over on a mother. A meter maid. A schoolgirl. I felt detached.

It reminded me of one day in the hallway of a prison administration building. I was staring at a pass I had in my hand, waiting outside a door marked PSYCHOLOGIST. I was wanted inside for a "newcomer's assessment." In the course of the questions we got around to the subject of the exact time period—the sensations felt on the last leg going in to a hold-up. I tried to explain the feeling. I described colours, the tingle of the excitement. I tried to put words to the loneliness that grips the stomach when you realize how apart from the world you really are at that moment. In the midst of talking I looked up from my chair into a pair of dull brown eyes that had traded passion for efficiency and I could see the sweat-beads on his scalp where his hair was starting to thin.

It was like trying to explain fire to an electric furnace mind. On my way back down the corridor I ate the apple that I lifted out of his lunch bag and jammed the core into the slot of a box marked STAFF SUGGESTIONS. I pushed open the door and decided for myself that the bright colours, the vibrancy of the day, the magic in the air was the handiwork of Mars, the god and protector of bandits. Recklessness is a different kind of love story.

"Maybe you're right Emile."

"Of course I am ... about what?"

"The money ... counting the money after. Maybe that *is* all there is."

"Aw shut the fuck up Bobby."

"Hey. Watch the lipping off you big Frog. I got a gun now."

Emile laughed and Denny pulled onto another ramp. This one wasn't corrugated and it led to the freeway.

The conversation died as the three of us dressed from our kits. Emile tossed two hard hats and a lunch box into the back window. Construction crew. Another one of Denny's props. This one was in the "smart" category. When I finished, my gloves and mask were on the seat next to me, the Uzi outside the bag between my feet, and the Colt holster was digging into the top of my thigh. I twisted it to the side for the moment. I could hear Luc grunting and climbing into his

outfit behind me.

"Hey. Put that fucken thing down." He had the Brazilian pistol out, holding it above the line of the windows. He ducked his head. Jesus Christ. This guy gets dumber as the day gets older.

"Hey Bobby. I'm still hungry." It was Emile looking to cook-a-horse for lunch.

"I never even got to eat, you guys."

"I never even got to eat, you guys," I mocked Denny.

"Well ... I never," he whined.

"Well I never. Hey Emile. Do you care if Denny got to eat or not? I mean do you really give a fuck huh?"

"Yeah, sure I do. I always care if the Little Guy's hungry. Don't I Little Guy? Here chew on my mask for awhile." And he dangled the woollen balaclava in front of Denny's face.

"Fucken comedians." Denny was hot. "Maybe while you guys are all inside I'll shoot across the street and get myself some fucken donuts." Denny was really beaking off good now. "You's would all look cute if I did."

"Go ahead Little Guy. We'll wait. And get me a coffee, double cream, would you?" Emile had to shout over the jeers and laughter.

"If you do go, you better have more than a fucken donut in your hand when you get back." I laughed at him. Everybody was riding Denner and Denner was riding an empty stomach.

Today was going to be a fast one. Short and sweet. I hoped Denny would have time to get the car turned around let alone go for breakfast before we came out. Sacks full. Half-full. I didn't care. We were coming out fast.

The laughter died, I bit my lip and tried to warm up a pair of cold feet. What was it I was afraid of? Burn-out? Losing my whip? I knew I was getting old, but how old? How old does anyone get before it's over?

Stephen Reid
Matsqui Prison

In the Small Hours of the Rain

I'm leaving again
and Stephen's sad-night eyes
fill the darkness. Behind the eyes
the world's pain becomes
something I am grateful for,
something tried but unpredictable
that darts into the heart and
leaves its ragged truth there.

I've got scars to prove it.
I've never belonged to anyone.
Now his eyes fill that emptiness
with something beyond love
and I can't get enough of it;
like grief, there's never enough.

Susan Musgrave

Sitting It Out

Somedays you sit in New England armchairs.
You stare into your
ice-cubes and swirl them once.
Your little sister called to say she would be
staying the night in the city.
She is with a Puerto Rican poet who
writes in dayglo graffiti and was in
People Magazine.
You try to be tolerant. You hate yourself.
But still you wonder if he's pushing downwards
on the back of her head. You ponder.
You are tragic. To a limit.

Other nights you lie across a motel bed in
Dundee, Florida. You are on the run.
The owner is on the other side of a thin wall
intimidating a blow-job out of the gentle waitress
who's been intimidated so long she thinks it's the
way it is.
Dundee is a night of six-packs, radios that
glow yellow in the dark, and the cadillac of
country music voices—
You let Mr. George Jones do it all for you.
The ceiling is green, then not;
the cadence of neon.
You are tragic.
You don't know the limits.

Stephen Reid
Matsqui Prison

Spring with a Broken Corner

Spring with a Broken Corner, *a novel by exiled Uruguayan writer Mario Benedetti, explores the experiences and effects of the military rule of the 1970's on Uruguay. Structured by a series of narrative vignettes, the novel presents a family forced to cope with incarceration and exile. The protoganist, Santiago, is a political prisoner, while his wife (Graciela), daughter (Beatriz) and father (Don Rafael) are exiled in Mexico.*

The excerpts that I have translated highlight the theme of incarceration. Santiago is presented as both Intramuros (within walls) and Extramuros (outside walls), and his thoughts are justaposed with those of Beatriz and Don Rafael. This combination shows the very human problems and suffering associated with the rupture and forced separation of a family, and, in so doing, it issues a strong condemnation of the military regime which caused such senseless grief.

— Michael Hoechsmann

Beatriz—An enormous word

Freedom is an enormous word. For example, when classes are over we say that we are free. As long as this freedom lasts we walk and we play, and we don't have to do any homework.

We say that a country is free when any woman or man can do what they wish. But even the free countries have some very prohibited things like, for example, killing. Actually, you can kill mosquitoes and cockroaches, and also cows for barbecues. And it is forbidden to steal, although it is no problem when someone keeps a little change when Graciela, who is my mom, asks me to buy something. It is forbidden to come late to school, although in this case we have to write a little note. Actually, Graciela has to do it, justifying why I'm late. That's what the teacher says: justifying.

Freedom means many things. For example, when one is not in prison, they say that one is free. But my father is in prison and nevertheless he is in Freedom, because that is what they call the prison where he has been for many years.

My father is a prisoner not because he killed or robbed or was late for school. Graciela tells me that my dad is in Freedom, I mean in prison, because of his ideas. It seems that my dad was famous for his ideas. I sometimes have ideas too, but I'm not famous yet. That's why I'm not in Freedom or, in other words, I'm not in prison. I'm sure that my dad must be having new ideas, tremendous ideas, but it is almost

certain that he doesn't tell them to anyone. If he does, when he leaves Freedom to live in freedom, they can put him back into Freedom. Do you see that it is enormous?

Don Rafael—God willing

I am where I am and he is where he is. My poor son. If I could only exchange myself for him. But they won't accept me. I am not sufficiently odious. I did not want to overthrow them, to disarm and defeat them. He did want to and he failed.

If I could go in there so that he could leave, perhaps I would not take it as hard. I think that at sixty-seven years they wouldn't torture me. Well ... you never know. In there I would close my eyes and thus I would liberate myself from the bars. And perhaps I could understand the nature of things. But no. I am where I am and he is where he is.

Intramuros—Tonight I am alone

It is curious. When one is outside and imagines that, for one reason or another, one would pass various years within four walls, one thinks that one could not stand it, that it would be simply unbearable. Nevertheless, it is bearable ... that is apparent. At least I have borne it. I don't deny having passed moments of distress, including moments of physical suffering. But I am referring to the pure distress when one begins to count, and the result is this day of confinement multiplied by thousands. Nonetheless, the body is more adaptable than the spirit. The body is the first to adapt to the new schedules, positions, rhythms of necessities, fatigue, rest and those things done and not done.

Don Rafael—A strange guilt

Santiago has complained to Graciela that I have not written to him in some time. That is true, but what can I tell him? ... That every time that I awake at night I cannot avoid the apprehension, the feeling or gloomy intuition that maybe at that moment they are torturing him? Or that he is recovering from a torture session, preparing for the next one, or swearing at someone?

Maybe he does not want to imagine that. He must already have too much with his own punishment, isolation and anguish. When one is dealing with one's own suffering, it does not help to add on another's griefs.

But I sometimes imagine that they are applying the electrodes to Santiago's testicles, and in this same moment I feel a real pain (not an imagined one) in my testicles. Or if I believe that they are giving him

a "submarine," I literally choke as well. Why? It is an old story, or best said, an old sign: the survivor of a genocide experiences a strange guilt for being alive. And if one escapes torture, for a valid reason (I don't count the unworthy reasons), one experiences a certain guilt for not having been tortured.

In other words, I don't have much to write. Certain topics cannot logically be mentioned to a prisoner, especially one who is in prison for being a subversive. As for other subjects, it is I who doesn't want to raise them. The topics that are left after these two constraints are stupid. Would Santiago accept that I write him stupidities?

Intramuros—How are your phantoms?

Today I was carefully examining the stains on the wall, a habit that I have had since infancy. First, I imagined faces, animals and objects in these stains; then I fabricated fear and even panic from them. Now it is better to convert them into faces and things, and not be afraid of them. However, this provokes a certain nostalgia in me for those days when my greatest fear was provoked by phantom stains which I created myself.

Don Rafael—Gentle and ugly lunatics

Santiago wrote me and he is O.K. I've learned to read between the lines and thus I know that he is still keeping a grip on himself. This has been my fear. Not that he weakens or denounces someone. Not that. I think that I know my son. My fear has been that he loses control over who knows what. The prison warden, I don't know whether the last or the second last, once said: "We did not dare liquidate them all when we had the opportunity, and in the future we will have to let them free. We must take advantage of the time we have left to drive them crazy." At least it was frank, right? Frank and despicable.

But in some ways this immodest secret revealed the key: it is in them, the bloodhounds, that there is something demonic. It is they who have taken advantage of the time to drive themselves crazy. But they are not gentle lunatics; they are deformed, frightening lunatics. Lunatics by vocation and free choice, the most ignoble form of lunacy. They received scholarships to Fort Gulick to become demented.

Whatever the case, even though that prison warden said what he did five years ago, I continue to clasp the only worthy words of his chilling program: "In the future we will have to let them free." In other words, they did not dare liquidate Santiago when they had the opportunity, but will he be among those they release before going crazy? —I hope so.

Beatriz—The seasons

Another important season is the spring. My mom doesn't like the spring because it was in this season that they apprehended my dad. "Aprender" without an "h" is like going to school. But with an "h" it's like going to the police. They apprehended my dad with an "h," and because it was spring he was in a green pullover.

Extramuros—Fasten seat belt

after these five years of winter nobody will deprive me of my spring
spring is like a mirror but mine has a broken corner# it was inevitable that it wouldn't be conserved whole after this intense quinquennium# but even with a broken corner the mirror functions
the spring functions
the very astute neruda asked in one of his odes# now spring tell me why you function and for whom you function# what luck that I remembered# what do you function for# I would say to rescue one from any pitfall# the word itself is like a ritual of youth# and for whom you function my modest impression is that you function for life# for example I simply pronounce spring and I feel viable animated alive

Mario Benedetti
Translated by Michael Hoechsmann

In April 1985, I saw Spring with a Broken Corner *performed in a stage adaptation by ICTUS, a Chilean theater group. Despite a state of siege which had been imposed by the Chilean military dictatorship, the performance retained its critical premises. The state of siege outlaws "unauthorized" public meetings, but this cultural performance nevertheless had far-reaching political implications. Not only did the issues raised correspond to Chilean reality, but one of the performers, Roberto Parada (Don Rafael), had suffered* the death of his own son *at the hands of the military (or with their compliance) only three weeks before. The standing ovation which the performers received at the end was more than congratulatory: it was a deep and extremely emotional identification on the part of all those present for a common affliction and a common goal. Although unspoken, the message was clear: "La dictadura, se va a caer" (the dictatorship is going to fall). —M.H.*

Still Born

It moves heavily kicking
like some half conscious foetus
hoping to be born

The gestation time of love
is far from constant
there are no predictable
due dates for the hopeful
it cannot be determined
by any midwife experienced physician
or clinical diagnostician
for a full term delivery
can never be assured

"Congratulations! You have
just delivered a bouncing
and healthy relationship ..."
or perhaps with a solemn
clearing of the throat lowering
of the voice preparing you
for the very worst diagnosis
you hear from the sepulchral
tongue "I am very sorry
Madam, but your new love
affair was still born ...."

Diana Hartley

Encounter

Circe was three hundred miles away in a sporting goods store somewhere near the Montana border, selling fishing rods and bait (maggots in little plastic bags filled with sawdust, which were kept in the bait fridge with the salmon eggs). Her lover Leonard was in the coffee-shop of the Greyhound depot in Calgary drinking coffee.

A young woman came into the coffee-shop, wearing the lonely greyhound eyes of a runaway from Saskatchewan. She had on one of those long insubstantial light jackets that runaways and juvenile prostitutes in Canada wear. She looked around the place without much conviction, and moved toward Leonard, who knew that she was going to sit at his booth with him. He knew this because his making eye contact with her demanded it. Anyway, for whatever reason, she did in fact sit down with him.

She, not wanting to appear forward, sat edge-wise in the booth, and looked out past the empty tables around them. Leonard, not wanting to impose embarrassment on her, drank his coffee, staring at the blue spirals rising from his cigarette in the ashtray in front of him. Eventually the "finally" appeared, and she asked him for a cigarette. Leonard gave her half of the package he had. She accepted them, and then, perhaps feeling obliged to respond in kind, gave him her name, which was all she had.

"I'm Teresa."

"Leonard."

She was still looking out past the empty tables, and he was still looking the table. They spent the time weighing the timbre of each other's voices, preparing for the next transaction.

"You goin' somewhere?"

"Bonertzville."

"Where?"

"Bonertzville."

Teresa here turned right way round in the booth, and put her eyes on the table, sharing Leonard's panorama of the arborite landscape. She put one of the cigarettes Leonard gave her into her mouth, and asked him for a light. He had the appropriate prop and lit her cigarette with it.

"What time is your bus?"

"Not 'til six ...." It was then only four. "I've got nothin' else to do though, so I thought I'd just hang around here 'til then .... Are you goin' somewhere?"

"No, I've got nothin' to do either." She lifted her eyes from the table and looked him straight in the face for about ten seconds. "I'm

staying at the 'Y', y'know, and today they told me to go down to the Welfare and get some money to give them, but the lady at the Welfare just sent me to some Women's Shelter, who just told me I'm too young to get anythin'. This ..." indicating the coffee-shop, "is like all there is left to do."

Leonard, not knowing how to respond, didn't, and instead looked at her with a face full of sympathy, to which she responded by turning her face away from his gaze. There was a tender tension developing.

"Do you want a coffee?"

"Ah, yeah okay." Teresa replied with the humility required of poverty.

Leonard got up and went through the food line, past the display of soggy cream pies and bran muffins, to the coffee machine and cash register, with its appropriate bleached-out cashier. He returned to the table with the coffee.

"Thanks."

"Yeah."

"So ..." Teresa sipped her coffee, "what's in Bonertzville?"

"My girlfriend."

"Does she live there?"

"Yeah." There was here a pause.

"Doesn't it get a little much, travelling to see her?"

"Well, we've been fighting lately, so I don't travel all that much." Which was a lie.

"Oh."

"How long have you been in Calgary?"

"I've only been here three days, but I've spent lots of time here before."

"How do you like it?"

"I don't know ... it's kind of strange. Like yesterday, no today, pardon me, I was in the lounge of the Sandman, and this old guy comes up to me and says 'How much?' like if I was a hooker or somethin'. It's weird."

"Do you want something to eat?"

She smiled a humble little smile. He got up and eventually came back with a cheeseburger on a plate, with french fries and the black/brown depot gravy. As he was setting the plate down in front of Teresa, he noticed that some of the patrons were looking at the two of them. He put a little extra swing in his movements to facilitate their suitcase fantasies.

As Teresa ate, Leonard tried to be nondescript, so as not to call her attention to herself in self-consciousness, but he could not refrain from looking at her. He looked particularly at her brow, where light brown hairs, thinly dispersed, gave her face cheery youth. He

watched her eating, filling herself with warmth.

"That do the trick?"

"Yeah. Thanks a lot."

"So, what are you doing in Calgary?"

"Well ..." she laughed lightly, "what can I say? I got tired of Saskatoon, and Saskatoon got tired of me. I left." This elicited a small laugh from Leonard.

"I think that happens to all of us somewhere along the line. I remember once reading about how in a certain community of apes, all the males would leave the tribe because none of the females in it attracted them. I suppose it's the same with us. We just get tired of the same old faces, and start to estrange them and be estranged."

"Yeah, I guess that's true .... When I think of all the guys I went to school with, I can't think of one of them I'd really like to go out with. It's funny really ...." She ended this response with a note of reflection.

"Saskatoon was really bad ..." she continued. "It got to the point where everything I did got talked about. I had a party a couple of weeks ago, when my parents were on holidays. There were a couple of guys there, and some beer and stuff, but nothin' heavy, y'know. And well anyway, the next day everybody's sayin' that there was a bunch of dope there and stuff, and that I slept with some guy named Kevin. I mean that's crazy! When my parents found out, and they couldn't help it, with so many people talkin' about it, they threatened to kick me out of the house for bein' a 'slut.' I never gave them the chance; I left."

They indulged in silence, which soon became awkward, leaving them both with clammy hands.

"Do you want to go for a drink?"

Teresa looked at Leonard pointedly, trying to see past his lips to his guts, to see if they were on fire.

"Okay," she answered, apparently having satisfied herself of his platonic motives.

"You ready to go?"

"Yeah," she replied, grabbing her cigarettes off the table and sliding out of the booth.

Outside the depot, in the dry summer air fragrant with the smell of clean laundry coming from the hotels around them, they were embarrassed by a Native woman yelling drunkenly at someone they couldn't see.

"Hey ya fuckin' asshole, come back here! Hey ya fucker, ya owe me!" She fell into the chain railing which ran around the parking lot behind the depot.

"Fuck."

Teresa looked at the woman, who saw her and tried to raise herself

to her feet.

"What the fuck you lookin' at?"

Teresa grew more embarrassed and uneasy. Leonard took her arm, meaning to lead her away from the scene.

"Why's she yellin' at me? I never said anythin' to her."

Leonard continued leading her away from the woman, who was addressing an ugly tirade of abuse at her.

"Why . . ." Teresa started.

"You're white." Leonard replied tersely, uncomfortable with his own whiteness. He led Teresa away with authority.

In the lounge Leonard chose, with their drinks in front of them (beer for Leonard, rye and seven for Teresa), they resumed their discourse.

"Shit," Leonard uttered.

"What?" Teresa asked with light, familiar laughter.

"I forgot my lighter in the bus depot."

Gregory Worobets

Saturday Night

It's Saturday night
and I'm locked up
In this cell so gray,
and I cannot sup.

I have some music
and now then, T.V.
But for a Saturday night,
I'd rather the chance
to catch V.D.

'cause it's boring as hell
after thirty months,
And the imagination
just ain't what it was.

To touch, to feel
and caress
The things those women have,
some call breasts.

But to also munch
on her fur pie
Freedom, freedom,
oh how I cry ....

R.A. Bomback
Stony Mountain Prison

The Mill

TO GERALD, wherever you might be ....

> *Everything in this book is fictional and everything is true. I have attempted, through literary creation, to bring out the general meaning and human content of a personal experience.*
>
> VICTOR SERGE, *Men in Prison*

The mill grinds slowly, imperceptibly, after your first resistance has been broken down. And since "you get used to anything," you also get used to this slow-motion existence cadenced by the bell .... Man thinks he consumes time, which in fact devours him. Reality is too concrete to be terrifying. You need imagination sometimes to realize how oppressing it is ....

It has been said that if a man fears he's mad, he isn't. Apparently stark raving loonies aren't aware they're crazy .... It could be true. I'm sure Gerald Budda—the archetypal tragi-comic figure with his Marty Feldman eyes further distorting his fun-house mirror-like view of the world—didn't know he was crazy, surreally painting his excrement all over the walls of his cell, bathing, naked, in his stainless steel toilet, and praying to the Bacon and Egg.

I admired his rebelliousness, in a pitying way. He had a thing for expensive restaurants. Perhaps this was partially due to his obsession with the great Bacon and Egg in the sky. It was rumoured, from a less-than-reliable source, both that his parents were Jewish and that he had been abused as a child, neglected of America's middle class breakfast of excess. Gerald Budda, whom even the psychiatric hospitals refused because he was "too great a headache"—can one be too mad?—was serving a life sentence on the installment plan, seven days at a stretch. He could never afford to pay for the extravagant, several course meals he ordered in Vancouver's fanciest restaurants—his inability to pay should have been obvious to all by the Salvation Army reject clothes he wore over his prison-issue pajamas, but peculiarly it wasn't. Ritualistically, he would politely excuse himself after completing the main course and dash out the front doors with a self-contented waddle before the dessert arrived. Once outside, he would register his displeasure—one couldn't be sure whether it was directed at the meal, the price or the service—by throwing a rock through the front plate glass window.

His last lawyer had argued that Gerald had simply misinterpreted the extent of one's freedom as guaranteed in the new *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and that Gerald's actions were a profound, albeit symbolic, statement against man's inhumanity towards man. The lawyer—he was a brash, naive young legal-aid lawyer just out of law school who drove a V.W. Beetle, owed $21,000 in Student Loans and mercifully had yet either to buy a pin-striped suit or to join the Federal Liberal or Conservative parties—continued that it was obscene that such restaurants existed when poor souls such as Gerald were starving in the back allies of the "dreary city." He pleaded for compassion and leniency, reasoning that it would be unjust for the State to sentence a man to prison merely for attempting to survive. He maintained that Gerald had a right—perhaps by divine sanction of the Bacon and Egg—to steal in order to survive. The Judge—the great protector (note: small g, small p), not of justice, but of bourgeois values—fat dripping like paraffin off his deceptively kind Kennedy face, a stylish pin-striped suit hidden under his black shroud, obviously did not agree with the lawyer and, in a noticeably perturbed mood, sentenced Gerald to nine months in prison. The perversity of the judgement was a graphic example of what Anatole France described as "the majestic egalitarianism of the law, which forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread."

This isn't about Gerald, however, but about the soul-numbing, mind-fucking oppressiveness of The Mill, whose sole purpose is to grate uniformly and grind bodies into socially acceptable and aesthetically pleasing packages of ground beef—what social scientists erroneously refer to as rehabilitation. I fear I'm losing my mind to The Mill, seduced by its mind-altering Muzak, being drawn between its smirking stainless steel teeth, condemned to a raw, incomplete, lobotomized existence. I am neither comforted nor convinced by the theory that if a man fears he's mad, he isn't. I want to scream but I won't give the malevolent miller the satisfaction of knowing he's winning. I have yet to concede, which in some slight, perverted way is my "victory-in-defeat." That's all I have left. My mind plots suicide, murder, destruction, anarchy, love. I crave passion. Like an automaton peasant I crave some life in my repetitive, passionless, Sisyphusean existence. The assembly line has replaced the chain gang. I waste my days building modular desks for the State which I gleefully sabotage at every opportunity. I pound the tracks on which the drawers run until they no longer slide smoothly—if I cause them only a thousandth of the harrassment they level at me I'll be vindicated.

Craving life and love I have just jacked off to another unfulfilling,

shallow fantasy. My life is a bad script filled with cardboard cutouts of celebrities and beautiful women I'd like to fuck: Cybill, Christie—and Eva, an attractive, domineering Bull-dyke nurse working for the prison whom I've fantasized about for many years, under the choreography and supervision of Dr. Ruth. Rather than feeling pleasant and relaxing, often masturbation increases my level of tension. I want more than the sexual act, more than some fleeting fucking fantasy, more than some juvenile porn mag filled with women like twenty-year-old Peggy and nineteen-year-old Olga. "What started out as a simple pool-cleaning ended up as a lust-soaked orgy." My mind lacks the imagination to create my own fantasies. I feel so removed from the outside, unable to envision what it was or will be like—yet it's impossible to believe the crap in *Hustler* and *Penthouse* and increasingly more difficult to get it up. The longer I'm in this shithole, away from female companionship and intimacy, the more I become afraid that when I'm finally released I'll be incapable of closeness, both physical and emotional. And I'm more fearful that I'll be incapable of love—both giving and receiving.

As unfulfilling and enervating as masturbation is, I sometimes feel it's the only joy and freedom I have. And yet, I feel like exorcising my sexuality by cutting my damned penis off. When I take a piss it just hangs there, an ugly, lifeless, fleshy protuberance. Painfully laughable. I centre my frustrations—both sexual and emotional—and their resolutions on my cock. Masturbation is my opiate. I don't want the feelings, any feelings, and I masturbate until they go away—or at least until I'm too tired to recognize them—and I'm freed for a time from my hauntingly elusive desires.

The only part of the Bible that I could relate to was somewhere in the New Testament, "Romans," I think, when the Apostle Paul admitted he was carnal (as opposed to spiritual) and did not understand his own actions: "... I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." It has been suggested that he was a homosexual, but I think it's more likely that he too was a compulsive masturbator. I used to attend the Church Services in Prison and was viewed, greedily, by the outside Christian volunteers as a prospective soul to be won. I despise their holier-than-thou attitudes; my sins being used to catapult some do-gooder to Heaven. The exterior of the Chapel-cum-tribunal, with its stained glass images distorting the saints into pained Cubist portraits, evokes an almost savage totemism.

Once inside, I become even more disturbed and disgusted by the conflicting images—the insidiousness of the "pornography" peddled by the Moral Majority—which assault my senses. Little tracts and booklets with titles like *What We Can Know About the Endtimes* and *I'm just waiting for the Rapture* are everywhere. Most obscenely, at

the front of the Chapel hangs a Crucifix: a large wooden carving of Christ, painfully nailed to a cross, his face registering immense suffering, seemingly intended to reinforce good Christian guilt and, "The Bible tells me so," God's love for mankind. "For God so loved the world that he gave (i.e., murdered) his only begotten Son ...."

The Minister, his voice, stereotypically, sounding like a poor imitation of a southern evangelist, stares me down and sears my eyes; I want to flee. An unseen force, some "hidden hand," propels me into the nearest chair and, quickly glancing about me, I realize, uncomfortably, that the congregation is empty. I wonder if he often sermonizes to an empty congregation. While his eyes are fixed upon me, there is no escape. He warns me of a far harsher sentence than my present five years if I do not conform and repent (it is becoming apparent to me that the penitentiary is a microcosm of the entire Christian community).

Perhaps madness is one's only release, one's salvation. Tom M. had the right idea when he ripped the Crucifix down off the wall of the Chapel. Some described the act as a brutal desecration, a sacrilege, blasphemy. It was, in fact, an act of the ultimate kindness. Tom explained to me that he only wanted to free Christ from his torture and suffering. Prison officials punished Tom, labelling him insane, but, I've often thought that his perception was a truly sane one.

I glare at the minister, without reverence. I want to scream at him to shut the fuck up. No answers exist here, only questions. Nietzsche was right when he observed that "hope is created for the hopeless." I feel sorry for many of the pseudo-Christians in prison; "they know not what they do ...." I have a friend—at least by jail-house standards, which is to use the term loosely—Saul, who considers himself to be "born again." If only he were, in the truer sense of the term. He has been seduced by the lies of Christians; his life reduced to a dishonest and superficial set of values ruled by repression, guilt and neuroses. His "spiritual growth" has been the decay of the man I once know. He is now a pathetic, pitiable wimp, confusing weakness for strength, praising his lord enroute to his destruction.

"And what is your name, my son?" the rotund minister softly asks, feigning concern. His condescending, pretentious manner makes me want to puke.

"Fuck you, and your god," I spit impetuously, venomously. An odd, unfamiliar laugh—raw, raucous—escapes my lips. At first it startles me, then it warms and envelops me like a down quilt. Slowly, unsteadily at first, I move towards the exit, feeling immeasurably stronger with each step. Reaching the threshold, I turn around and face the frightened little man silently praying to his god. My anger quickly dissipates and is replaced by a warmth which I can only

describe as white, bright and clean. I had finally slain one of the Goliaths of my youth. I can only feel sympathy for the minister who is as much a victim as Saul. I turn and, standing fully erect, proceed to my Living Unit, with a rediscovered lightness in my step, knowing I had beat him.

I look about me and, like some drugged 1960's love child, I grin without thought or reason. A wickedly hollow laugh echoes, eerily, seemingly from the east-side of the tier, and slaps the grin off my face. I choose not to conspire with the anonymous echo. The laugh rings out again and again, taunting me with insincerity. It sounds like Vallard's squeaky, rodent-like laugh. It is rumoured that Vallard, a creepy, tiny little man with a thin face and a long nose, was voted, prophetically, most likely to take a life (or steal a car) by his elementary school classmates. He is always laughing, yet, ironically, he has so little to laugh about. He makes it difficult, if not impossible, to like him. He is a jail-house merchant, the proverbial used-car salesman, selling drugs, canteen and hobby work, whatever the other prisoners will buy at a two-for-one markup. He has only six months until release and his laugh has become noticeably more strained; strangely, he shuffles about like a condemned man.

We are all condemned. "Yes Sir, No Sir, three bags full." Docile bodies shuffling in unison. Powerlessness is magnified in prison. There is no independence nor is there solidarity, only survival and self-interest. Solidarity is a myth perpetuated by frightened, mindless little conformists. If the pigs don't get you, another prisoner probably will. The real world's no different—everyone's a pig or a prisoner; docile bodies shuffling in unison.

I am called to see my Living Unit Officer, a squat matronly man who fancies himself my mother, which unleashes a host of resentments in me every time he interviews me. I was feeling content—admittedly a dangerous feeling for one to experience in prison—and do not want him to intrude on the little peace afforded me. Woodenly, I march to his office, a marionette, increasingly despising his control over me with every step. When I finally arrive, it is far worse than I had anticipated. In a very business-like, smug fashion, he hands me an official-looking document. Ambivalently, I attempt to scan quickly its contents, but it demands and gains my fullest attention. Wading through the carefully couched legal terminology, I am informed that I will not be released in six months on Mandatory Supervision as I had been planning for the past three years. Rather I will be detained for the remainder of my sentence—almost another two years! I am being detained under Bill C-67 because I have not availed myself sufficiently of the opportunities offered and am considered a high-risk to re-offend. In essence, they are going to "gate" me because I didn't

play their game, or, more precisely, I didn't play it well enough. I feel sick .... Neither he nor I say a word. For once in my life I am speechless. I leave his office, purposefully, yet, paradoxically, without purpose. I brush by Vallard on the way out and can identify with him more so now than I could have an hour ago. I notice that I too am beginning to shuffle like a condemned man.

Jean-Paul Sartre envied "the great criminals" such as Jean Genet, particularly for the solitude they enjoyed. I do not wish to be envied; I envy no man. I hate all mankind. I hate what we have and aspire to become: sallying sycophants pursuing "self-actualization"—the American Nightmare. I mourn and curse the dead warriors—Saul, Jerry Rubin, my father, myself—and celebrate the Gerald Buddas who continue to take Don Quixotic aim at the windmill.

As much as I despise humanity, I hold myself in greater contempt. Is it a perversity within my nature that I don't end it but rather continue the self-abasement? Am I a coward? I don't want to live but I'm afraid to die. I'm so tired of being afraid and hiding who I am—particularly my humanity. It just doesn't make sense to me anymore. I'm confused and I'm afraid. My fear is indescribable. To attempt to describe it is to limit it, and to risk minimizing it. The fear is not bounded by the narrative of a horror novel; it is a fear so grotesque, so terrifying, that it lacks form.

Tail between my legs, like a misbehaved mongrel, I scurry to the psychologist. Twenty minutes later I am still waiting in the psychologist's less-than-calming, cramped outer office. Autistically rocking back and forth, I am furious that I have been kept waiting. "They're all pigs," I muse to myself, concluding what I already knew; they can't be trusted. After what seems to have been as long as the five years that I am presently serving, Doctor Goody beckons me down to his office. I shuffle behind Goody, attempting to disguise my discomfort. The psychologist's office is clinically cold. The decor is utilitarian. The office is devoid of personal items, indeed of any personality that might give some evidence, aside from morbidity, of the enigmatic psychologist's personality. There are no windows.

I feel sorry for the psychological parasites and their prey, particularly in the light of the rumours I have heard. Apparently, if the prison psychologists can't fashion a research paper or book from their "clients," their case studies make interesting and sought-after dinner conversation. The most interesting after dinner conversation I have heard recently is a reasonably trustworthy rumour that Gerald Budda is out of prison now and doing fine. The height of irony is that he apparently owns and operates his own café, "La Violane," in Kitsilano ....

"What can I help you with, Mr. Kibalchich?" the psychologist

saccharinely questions, his hands non-threateningly clasped like an evangelist, a politician, or a mass murderer.

I look at him carefully, suspiciously. He has an Ultra-Brite smile that blinds.

"Uh, ... nothing. I just wanted to let you know that I won't be needing to see you anymore," I replied. I stood up and, without waiting for his response, I left his office with a sense of elation that Maslow couldn't have begun to describe.

It is late and tonight, for a change, I welcome sleep.

M.A.V.

Afterword

... I slept like a stone. Another day is dawning. I am ready. I shall wear down the Mill.

Les Merson
Mountain Prison

Wild Thoughts

Always on the outside looking in, wanting what I cannot have—a perpetual window shopper.

Like a cat to a pair of headlights I am mesmerized with ambivalence.

An impotent jellied mess masquerading as a father and a man.

Goose-stepping towards me on dancer's legs was a huge, foul-smelling black spider with ambivalent blue eyes.

She was the Norma Jean beneath the Marilyn.

He emerged from his cocoon, a caterpillar—jackbooting to a different drummer.

My shoulders sagged slightly as I realized my sum was not greater than my parts. I pictured myself a wind-up toy, arms at my side, walking rigidly erect with a fireman's cap seated low on my forehead.

My cross was my bed, not bereft of suffering. "Christ died for your sins," the grizzled old rubby had confided to me just this morning. Bullshit, he didn't die for mine—I'm dying for them.

She went through men like pantyhose.

He threw up a wide Colgate grin.

When I am old and fat and full of fears.

My prison, my bedroom, my keeper, my wife.

I was engulfed and consumed by fire but it did not purge me; it sooted my soul and blackened my heart.

As a child I sold my soul for a trainset.

A single heartbeat reverberating against the bedsprints.

The False Prophet: a tall, kindly, child-buggerer.

Soft features, concealed like a weapon, poke out from beneath her uniform.

I desire to hold a trigger-happy hand that loves to kill.

Like a bored cashier viewing an endless lineup, she speaks to me but says nothing.

My life will be nothing more than a cheap, trashy, dime-store novel until I re-write it.

Les Merson
Mountain Prison

Danish Modern at Night

Appliqued cardboard box
walls bed desk
flourescent-blue lit
steel
concrete
all the World loves
Danish Modern at night.
The Tivoli Gardens
Hamlet's Castle
The Little Mermaid
of Hans Christian Andersen
cut glass
silver spoons
all the World loves
Danish Modern at night.
Flamen-haired Florence Nightingale
courtesy of Kobenhaven
warm
wet
tight
all the World loves
Danish Modern at Night.

Bruce Chester
Kent Prison

An Interview with Larry Howett

by Eddie Rouse

Eddie Rouse: How long were you at the Regional Psychiatric Centre [RPC]?

Larry Howett: Ninety days. I went originally for a thirty day parole assessment. Then the staff suggested that a more in-depth evaluation would be beneficial. The carrot was that if I did a year in their program, I would be recommended for a minimum camp.

ER: What did the program entail?

LH: The first thirty day assessment involved very little contact with the staff. There are psychiatric nurses and security personnel at RPC. The psychiatric nurses each do a chart on you, spending two hours or so a week talking with you about progress. The first months in the

The Psychopathic Checklist

Adam
showed a blatant minimization of the offence's gravity,
a lack of affective tone.
Appeared to be his stated age.
Later acknowledged greater culpability
which either demonstrates his less
manifestly psychopathic structure
or,
his increased sophistication at character disguise.
No. [14] Impulsivity.
"recommendation: secure custody."

Violent Offenders Program [VOP] was noteworthy because they did absolutely nothing. The assessment itself consisted of the better part of four weeks of silent, "Here you are" in the Nova Ward. Nova is like Induction and the VOP range is in the same unit. You are asked to write a biography of your life. There are three or four interviews with the nurses. Then they try to gauge whether or not you are anti-social by your behaviour, whether you associate with the other prisoners in the institution. Nova consists of sexual offenders, rats, and what not. There is no ironclad rule that you must talk to these people but if you don't, it indicates psychopathic and anti-social behaviour, which immediately goes into the assessment that the board eventually reads after thirty days.

Then you are told to get your own job. But you're excluded from certain jobs automatically because you come from the general population of other prisons. Very few RPC inmates come from the populations of other joints.

ER: Most of them are hiding?

LH: Most of them cannot get along in the population of other penitentiaries in the country. Guys that are just scared, child molesters, rapists, weaklings that cannot take a slap in the face for the things that they have done, end up in RPC. Most of them go into the Violent Offenders Program, only a few as sexual offenders. The instant I got

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They paid for the time they occupied his space,
there was a charge
for the hours involved.
Heart like a parking lot.
No. [9] Parasitic lifestyle
living off one another
living on the drip
symbiosis.

to RPC I was looked at unfavourably because I came from population, and I was a drug addict. In the class system the nurses have set up at RPC that combination is rock bottom, worse than the child molester and the rapist. Even the psychologist who came out from the SHU [Special Handling Unit: a euphemism for the cells used to house Canada's really violent prisoners] was flabbergasted at the way the RPC Violent Offenders Program was being run. There were at most four guys who would actually be considered violent offenders there by his standards. The rest had all been scared and had found an easy way out.

I noticed that they had all their answers down pat to their problems. Many were veterans of Penetang (a forensic psychology center for the criminally insane in Ontario), and other RPCs and had their rap down so they could anticipate what the staff wanted to hear. A number of them had been going through this daily group therapy for several years: the same rehash, the same stories, the same moves. Just the faces changed every now and then.

The high point in group was when someone would break down completely and burst into tears. Ironically this showed "progress," and I use the word in quotes, because the staff thought it demonstrated remorse for the crime. The VOP is based on a system derived from a book called *The Criminal Personality.* Samenow and Yochelson were two of the major contributors. It is an overview of the criminal personality and is considered gospel by the RPC Violent Offender nurses.

As many women as would have him
he had.
a romantic character
  peripatetic and picaresque,
Frank in between the spines
of so many short stories.
No. [11] Promiscuous sexual behaviour
  How many tales make a tome?

ER: Did you challenge that gospel?

LH: Yes. I asked academic questions about the validity of this type of research, and came up with source material that suggests that it is very contentious. And I became a target. They don't like interference. One prisoner had a psychiatrist who had testified on his behalf get barred from entering RPC, and was threatened with transfer if he pursued the matter. Any intrusion is viewed as a threat and the consequences are immediate. A board sits, a decision is made, and the prisoner is shipped.

ER: What kind of therapy do they use?

LH: The therapy sessions use a number of different techniques. A popular one is confrontational therapy where they push your button to see how angry you will get

One thing that really puzzled me was the attitude they had that RPC is not a prison but a hospital, even though it is part of the penitentiary system and prisoners who go through RPC will be sent back to the other prisons. The premise they have is that people who go there want help but actually most people go there to escape.

ER: What about prisoners who are forced by the Parole Board to go to RPC?

"Gonna change the world."
with a sledgehammer.
It was his need for stimulation ...
  so he took to banging the heads
  off statues
and parking meters
that soon seeped silver.
No. [3] Proneness to Boredom
videodrome.

LH: The Parole Board either "looks favourably" upon them going there or nails the coffin for getting anything if they don't. But coercive transfers to RPC are looked at negatively by the staff: they don't want them there. If you go as a dope fiend from the population to Nova Ward, "New Beginnings" they call it, you're viewed as incorrigible and a convict who adheres to what they call the "con-code." The con-code simply means that you are not a snitch and you don't feel that you have to make friends with people who are involved in nothing more than a therapeutic situation with you. But if you don't make friends with them, then you're a target. If you don't make friends with the staff, you're a target. That doesn't mean "How's the wife and kids?" But they expect first name familiarity, you playing card games with them. If you don't, then you're branded sociopathic and anti-social. One of the signs they look for is whether you show empathy for your fellows. Their curriculum becomes apparent in group therapy: without overt demonstrations of empathy that can be analysed, you are somehow mentally and emotionally deficient.

ER: So when some rapist says that he's sorry for raping a grandmother but he was abused himself as a child, you're supposed to say, "Well, I empathize, I understand and I feel really sorry for you."

LH: You must empathize across the board. The sexual offenders should be looked at in the same light as a bandit or a drug addict. Drug

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Hitler
tossed on a park bench
in his bed of newspapers.
Gipper plays a president.
we watch TV.
No. [2] Grandiose sense of self worth.
"Who could imagine it?"
and time and again
the only meaning of correct is traditional.

addicts are looked at as worse than the worst. They are incurable and many levels below the sex offender. Sex offenders can be "cured"—again in quotes.

ER: A drug addict can never be cured?

LH: No. He's a professional liar, he's this and that, he feels he's a victim. He's devious and scamming.

The next phase of the testing takes about four days. It is done in one building by a woman and it involves a number of eye-hand coordination things. A number of very simple puzzles, the Minnesota Multiple Personality test and a number of tests along these lines mostly to test whether or not you have powers of reason, powers of self-control. For instance, some tests are set up so that you're told to develop patterns by watching how they go. You get them right and it rewards you, in a Pavlovian sense. It rewards you with a "ding" if you're right and a "blaaat" if you're wrong. Well, they'll mess with that process so that when you know you're right, you'll get the blat. Maybe two or three times in a row and depending on your reaction, that's where the real learning according to them takes place—how you react.

The group therapy sessions revolve around all the standard pat things like peer pressure; what forces people to commit crimes again. Feelings. Feelings are a big thing. How you feel. If you can express how you feel, it's "progress"—in quotes again. One guy would stand up and rant and rave, a guy who had been in Penetanguishene or a lot

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"As Jimmy preached on Channel 12,
sweet holy music
crested to the bank of my soul.
He took me up
and he shook me down."
No. [1] Glibness and superficial charm.
Bishops count the tears
that Jesus wept.

of other places: "I'll cut your heads off you fucking creeps!" This person was cooled out in fifteen minutes. If another individual lost his cool and rattled off, "You're an asshole," he was history. Gone down the road.

ER: Because he showed his anger?

LH: Yes. What I found the most puzzling was that two or three or four individuals there had very, very serious psychological problems. But the staff either was unwilling to take the time to sort these out or simply gave up the ship. The people who got along well in the program say anything or do anything compatible with what the nurses will believe. They are hep to what to say.

ER: So all it really is is a school to learn how to manipulate.

LH: Exactly. Now through time they claim they can sort all that out. Yet, as I saw it, many of the people who were involved in that process were also involved in many illegal activities in the institution and were hiding behind "mommy."

ER: So they had a license to operate?

LH: When something went wrong they blamed the other guy, the high profile types. All kinds of strange things happen. Like the marathon

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A pathological liar
tells the truth
for no good reason
or,
lacks a logical
cause
for lying:
A Revelation of oblivious sickness.
Yet,
black and white lies provide the slip
for the slide.
No. [4] Pathological Lying.
"...The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."
"...the maximum benefit of incarceration."
"I'm sorry."

run for charity. They allow the press in; it's good PR, right? Big success. The prisoner who set it up finishes the run, everything is cool, but shortly after he is told he can't do it again. It was considered counter-productive to his therapy because he gained prestige. They said it had something to do with his need to find somebody to love, as Jim Carroll would say.

One time shit was put in someone's bed. The circumstances were very vague. Evidence pointed towards the guy doing it himself to attract attention to get transferred. This was brought up in group and hashed out. A week later jam is thrown on his floor. Suspicious, right? When the special meeting for that came along, staff policy was: "If this happens again, recreation will be cancelled for everyone." It was a play to get someone to rat.

ER: Peer pressure, I suppose.

LH: Yes. Everybody was supposed to police everyone else. It's a proper little police state, but the nurses and staff at RPC take extreme exception to being called guards or prison workers. They claim to be psychiatric nurses. Even the same ones who hit them with hypos and fill them with bug juice or lock them up in closets claim to be nurses and not guards.

The Condor Legion lacked empathy
the 5th Airforce, good men
hard job
Skypilots, right reasons
"If I cut my finger, you don't feel the pain."
Manchukuan Unit 521 performed
plague experiments with American airmen
and sold the movies to MacArthur.
They shared a professional code:
Dr Ishii, later Med. Assoc. Dir. Japan.
Dr Mengele starred as the Angel of Death.
Dr Teller, the voice of Atomic America.
No. [8] Callous / Lack of Empathy.
morality of science
science of human nature
emotion is born out of habit
endstop.

There are various kinds of therapy over there, other than the group therapy which is the straight "sit down and talk." Each guy takes a turn as it goes around the range each day. On these therapy sessions, one or two nurses are always there. They write extensively—two or three foolscap pages a day on each person—on his contribution to the group; on his lack of contribution to the group; on the direction his answers tend to support, in terms of a six dollar word like "psychopath" or "sociopath." The text results from the C.S.B. testing—the four day parole assessment—are made available to you in a generalized manner by the psychologist before they send you back.

The living conditions are much more relaxed in that you can have plants in your cell; you can do your cell up the way you want. But the movement is very strictly controlled. The violent offender wards can inter-visit, the psychotic wards downstairs and the skinner ones are off limits. The sexual offender ranges are off limits and they have group sessions by themselves. They don't have group sessions with the violent offenders. The violent offenders are split into two categories—the aggressive and the passive—which seems to be a contradiction in terms.

ER: I don't understand how a violent offender can be passive.

LH: Well, passive in his dealings. If there are five guys who aren't very aggressive in terms of getting up on a chair and ranting, they belong on the East range. If they're aggressive, they are placed on the

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When it is so hot
you don't want to move
the kids wrench a
red hydrant
and get naked in the
splashy torrent on the pavement.
That's pressure.
No. [10] Poor behavioural controls.
"What if there is a fire?"
"What if there *is* life after death?"
They dance in the fountain,
piss in the pool.

North side. But as I understand, they shut down the East side.

Another funny incident was a fellow who was doing a bunch of very simplistic puzzles, like a five piece elephant you put together. The fellow took great exception to this. He thought that his intelligence was being insulted so he put it together backwards with the nose on the tail and the tail on the nose. He finally got really mad and demanded to see the warden and there was a banging on the door window. He looked up and there was a fellow wearing a clown suit, waving his hands. At that point, the fellow expressed grave concern and said he wanted to see the warden, at which point he was told that *was* the warden. There was some do going on and they were all dressed up. They're always doing stuff like that over there.

ER: Weird. How about the rest of the staff?

LH: The turnover of staff was high. The way that they ran it was control. Anything that was seen as a threat to their hegemony over the people was something they looked to get rid of. For instance, my education was viewed from the second I got there as a detriment. I was viewed as a threat by the people who worked there, particularly when I got down to the violent offender range where intellectualizing was a big word that was used against me many times. I'm not sure I understand the nature of the criticism.

ER: What I think they were probably trying to get at is that you could

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There have not been
any significant changes, Joseph K.
You are not internalizing
the concerns
shared with you.
You have not addressed,
sufficiently,
the reasons for which you are
currently incarcerated.
You represent a high risk
to re-offend.

Joseph K., his life was one long offence,
No. [12] Early Behaviour Problems.

understand your feelings in an intellectual sense but not emotionally. You're not emotionally in contact with yourself.

LH: That's possible, but let me give you an example. A man, during therapy, brought up his view of morality. His view of morality was the ten commandments. That was morality. He was a new found Christian and he went on and on about how the world did not operate correctly and how the ten commandments were the basis of morality and if everyone went by them, and on and on and on. I asked the fellow to repeat five of them. He couldn't come up with five. Therefore I was guilty of intellectualizing.

ER: Because you challenged him?

LH: It wasn't meant to be a challenge. I just wanted to point out that we didn't need any bogus religious bullshit in group and that he knew little, if anything, about what he was talking about.

Eventually I was called up before a board, ten days prior to my departure, and told, "You are doing fine, more than what we expected you to do. You haven't been involved in drugs or any problems." But they went on to explain that I was a threat to their hegemony over the other prisoners because people looked up to me; because I could ask the right questions and elicit the right responses.

But at another meeting after a scene at the Toastmaster's club where I split when a nurse started hassling me, about eight doctors

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A modern adaptation
machine head,
boxed in tight, on the rails,
trained man knows how he is going,
has a schedule:
shunt
the music and rhythm of repetition.
No. [16] Failure to accept responsibility
for his own actions.

and administrators started blazing questions at me. When I'd start to answer they'd cut me off with more questions. The gist was: You're taking valium illegally and smoking pot here. A friend of yours told us. I offered to take a urinalysis test and the head nurse, a real Queen of Hearts, barked, "See, he's refusing to take the test!" I said, "No, give me the bottle right now." She continued, "You heard him, he's refusing." First the sentence, then the trial. Next, the head doctor accused me of writing a book. Obviously it wasn't right that I should be writing a book. "You're always in your cell!" "No, I'm not," I replied. "Are you saying that my staff is lying?" "But I'm never in my cell. It's been brought up in group. It's been resolved." The end note was, "Well, we don't believe you! We don't think there is any real treatment for you here. We're thinking about transferring you but there will be nothing punitive involved." "Ya, but the act of transferring me without a positive recommendation is punitive itself." One of them explained that I had to lose friends, particularly Gary L. whom I've known for twelve years. Stop hanging around with Gary and instead befriend three psychotics from one west. That was his advice. And those psychotics, straight chloropromazine pilots: these guys couldn't even talk. And they'll give you all the bug juice you can swallow: unconscious equals manageable but it doesn't equal conversation.

ER: So they even wanted to control who you talked to?

LH: Exactly. At that point I said no. My friends are my friends. I've done fine here. Gained weight, in a good headspace and you want to

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The fall of lead-zinc dust
muddied the sky
over the metal tines
at the switching yard.
Amniotic tailing ponds,
iridescent chem-ochre beaches
sand wet oil,
the post-historic
adaptation:
cockroach man
No. [20] Criminal versatility.

ship me back to Matsqui where I spent that last five years sideways on a bed full of pills. Finally I received a document that said I was being transferred because of the way I reacted to being told I was being transferred. Real doublespeak.

ER: Do you think anybody gets any help over there?

LH: Yes, some people do if they are really fucked up. I think they got some help.

ER: But how effective is that help in the long term?

LH: I don't know. It won't show up until the person is put in some situation where the external stimuli are not controlled. Over there, it's controlled. Put them somewhere where they're going to be face to face with stimuli without those people to run to, to figure out how to do it, and they'll have problems.

And RPC messes up people who will eventually have to go back to the pens anyway. By the time guys have spent two or three years there they've said things they shouldn't have; they're into resolving situations passively; they've worked on their self-control—and Pow! all of it is out the window on the big yard again. I should add that RPC doesn't recommend many to get out on parole anyway. During my time there they recommended one sex case to get out. No one else got a thing. It's like the more they dig, the less "normal" someone seems and the more nervous they are about letting him out.

What do you believe in?
Neon lights that
rock and roll
the abiding power of love to see us through
sex with objects that vary
the Ten Commandments
for white people in rapture.
  There has to be more darling!
  Another cup of instant coffee,
  another long blue file.
Is it safe?
No. [19] Revocation of conditional release.

What they're doing is treating the symptoms. So you've got a problem in how you cognitively put things together. Now we give you a way to change that. But it's unknown what will happen when those old stimuli return. Will what you've learned be enough to handle it; I don't think history bears out that they've been successful. I did ask them whether they keep success rate statistics for guys released from the sexual offender program, and they said no. I don't know if the doc lied to me or not.

ER: There's no follow-up outside?

LH: Oh something rudimentary, a nurse with dozens of "clients." The worst sex offenders—the guy who got three years for molesting over a hundred kids—are treated with kid gloves; best of everything, the best jobs, goldfish tanks on their ranges, you name it.

ER: So they are pushing this normalization process but it's a false normalization because the situation is so controlled.

LH: Yes, there's no place you can go where you feel alone. They are always watching, even in your cell. If it's not the staff, it's the other inmates who report to them. It's a social nightmare.

My advice is that guys go over there for their thirty day assessment and get the hell out. Don't get involved. They'll spin any story to get you to stay; once you're stuck they'll keep you for years.

Await the final moment,
cross-legged, a Buddha,
at the glacial abyss.
  volunteers for lighthouse duty on Pluto
  packs a lunch, fills a wife, responsibly procreates.
No. [13] Lack of realistic long term goals.
  An increasing number of us
  do not have life assurance.

Psychopathic Checklist: Coda

I

Sigmund Spider spawned
the Behaviourdyne Psychodiagnostic Laboratory
IBM series 2000,
100 million bytes per second
at the cerebrus mundus/
or on off days,
daily press horoscopes.

II

her spit smooth lips,
  in the movie unchanged:
Take 27.
after five years of shooting
They tell you to
"Reveal your real self!"

III

Another professional judge,
the angel of Death,
is dead.
to console faith in underlying order,
they published reports which
unequivocally established
that his dying
was painful, prolonged and friendless:
    drowned,
    limped on a fractured thigh
    had a constant spinal cyst,
    and an exquisite sore in his mouth.

John Abbott
Mission Prison

An Interview with Gene Graul

by Eddie Rouse

Gene Graul: I knew they had a Violent Offenders Program at RPC; that it was a treatment program and that basically it was more for guys getting out soon. But I requested to go there because I felt I needed some help. I wasn't given too much information about it beyond what other inmates told me. I went voluntarily. I stayed for two years.

The program's goals are to help people who have violence in their past recognize the reasons that caused them to do it; what motivated them inside. A lot has to do with defensiveness, behaviour a person just isn't aware of. It's to help an inmate gain internal, not intellectual, insight into themselves. Once you internalize their focus then you can learn how to change. They provide ways to help you change.

Eddie Rouse: How was the program set up?

GG: You begin in induction. You go through an in-depth psychological assessment. The MMPI, the WAIS, the motor-perceptual things. And they get a pretty good idea of where you are at psychologically: are you anti-authoritarian or hyper-defensive or what. Then they place you in one of the available programs if they have a program that will suit you. Some guys are just sent back because they don't want anything to help them at the time. Sometimes their problems are such that the program would not really benefit them. So they are refused treatment.

In the Nova ward they gauge what kind of program you go into. Generally it's a one month stay in Nova and it's not bad. There you meet the psychologist who will be taking care of you and who is in charge. But you actually only have an interview with a psychologist once or twice while you're in Nova. During the two years I was there, I only saw him twice more.

ER: You only spoke to the psychologist twice?

GG: Yes, and the second time was only because I requested it. Your main contact is with the nurses. Every three months you go before a treatment team: it includes psychologists, occupational therapists, the Chaplain, the head nurse and the other department reps who comprise it. The team tosses questions at you. They let you know where they think you are in their program; what needs work, what progress you have made, etc. They both encourage you and reprimand you if you

need to be pushing harder or whatever. If you're not working in the program that's where they'll lay it on you.

ER: What does the treatment after Nova consist of?

GG: They describe it as twenty-four hour treatment. Your work is supposed to be treatment: your recreation is treatment; your hobbies are treatment, and you have group therapy. When you get down to it, the only real therapy that is not normal activity, is your group. You have group every day either in the morning or the afternoon for an hour and a half. The sexual offender ranges do it all day and often have extra sessions. It is a very intensive program compared to ours. You are expected to be there or you will be docked pay. You also have interviews with the nurses for about an hour a week. They also really stress socialization with the other guys on the range. They want you to play cards or games like Aggravation so the nurses can assess how you react in a social setting. And there is a very tight regulation that you can only have two people in a cell at a time; this inhibits socialization.

ER: So you are expected to socialize out in the open?

GG: Right. They really want to observe you.

ER: I've heard that whoever dreams up these programs doesn't like to have any outside interference. Is this true?

GG: That totally depends upon the person and who wants to come and visit. You're not an inmate but a patient, and patients are allowed to visit. I had a counsellor visiting me from the outside and they fully endorsed that. But if you're rebellious and you want to bring in an outside psychologist or something like that, yes, they are going to scream.

From their point of view it makes sense. An inmate might be trying to escape their therapy. He could bring in an outside psychologist who sees him how often? He doesn't really see your behaviour and you could just scam him. And you can get conflicting opinions, you can get them warring with each other and you actually escape the therapy that you're there for.

ER: Yes I can understand that line of reasoning but I was thinking of them interpreting visiting family and friends as interference.

GG: Actually they are in the process now of getting trailers for Private Family Visits. My parents came out to visit me from Edmonton once a year for a week. They visited all day every day and the staff

fully encouraged that. As a matter of fact once a nurse came out for a chat with my parents. Again it depends upon the person. It also depends upon whether they feel the people who are coming in to visit you will hamper your therapy. Of course, that leaves a lot up to their judgement, to their perception of the way things are. It's true that the nurses and the treatment team have a lot of power over your activities because everything is part of your therapy including your visits. They cannot veto your visits but they can discourage them.

You have to get your work placement cleared through the treatment team. They have to OK your hobbies: what hobbies you are going to do; how much time you can spend on them; if you are going to participate in recreation; if you are going to do music; how much time you can allot to it. You have a daily schedule set out with what you are supposed to be doing. At a certain place at a certain time doing certain activities. The thing is, if you show that you are working on the program, that you are sincere, and taking responsibility for your actions then they will give you a lot of free movement.

ER: What about these group therapy sessions?

GG: They can be very hairy! That's the toughest part of the whole program by far. You get a lot of game playing by both the patients and the nurses. I found the hard part to be when you get a few guys who are not there to really participate in the program—they are trying to scam their way through—and who are very defensive. Things get pointed out to them by other members of the group and they react venomously. That creates splits on the range and a lot of animosity because guys feel they are being centered on and they refuse to look at their problems from an objective point of view. Suggestions are brought up. People give their opinions and then these guys react because of their defense mechanisms. That's when really heavy confrontations occur. Some guys react to everything. Crisis brings things up and it becomes a dead group where you basically sit there and say nothing worthwhile.

ER: Did you find the group going over the same things as new people entered the group?

GG: Yes. The same techniques were used. You really do get out of it what you put into it. I started out as the one everybody analysed. I would tell them my past, how I felt about the different things that bothered me and they would work over it. The nurses really try to encourage honest self-disclosure. Once you get past the phase of realizing your problem areas, then you start concentrating work on

them, struggling with ways to overcome them, doing a fair amount of what they call "risking." Doing things you really don't like to do but things that are beneficial to you to help you gain more confidence or insight into how you behave. Then you go on to the final phase as a group facilitator where you are the ...

ER: Leader of the pack?

GG: Right. I was at that stage for about a year. You try different techniques. Every person is different so I found there were always new things I could learn, even things about myself. There are positive things you get out of it. After saying that, as time rolls on it does get very monotonous and redundant.

ER: Did you get the feeling that many of the vocal ones were just there to manipulate?

GG: Well, you can't really categorize anyone because there were vocal ones who were working on themselves, but there were people there who were really honing their skills in manipulation. The thing is that over time, through groups, it becomes fairly clear where a guy is coming from. You can only hide it for so long. I can't remember anyone whose true colours didn't finally come out. You're living with guys everyday through this mundane routine and you get to know who does what when there's nothing to do. It's interesting to see how the hell they handle situations. So it becomes clear where a person is at.

ER: What are your feelings on the program? Do you feel it helped you?

GG: Yes. It helped me realize some things I didn't realize before. I had a problem disclosing myself emotionally, unable to express my feelings on the spot. I used to bury everything. RPC gave me an environment where I could be more emotional; you could let things out. Sometimes it wasn't all that good; sometimes it created a problem because when you did that, you shouldn't. There were a lot of Catch-22s unfortunately.

ER: They told you you should be doing something and then reversed and said you shouldn't?

GG: Yes. I was told to express my anger, to not bury it inside but to ... uh ... talk to the person about it. Confront the guy and say, "Listen, I'm angry. You're bothering me! Like listen, I'm feeling this. What am I feeling?" But when you do that, especially to a nurse ... then

again it depends on the nurse because some of them are very good and will understand but others will write down, "He was very angry today. He's rebelling. He's being defensive." The list goes on. You have to reassure yourself that over time they will start to see where you're really coming from and they did. I made some changes and over time, if you make changes, they'll see them. Sometimes it takes a while and that's the frustrating part. You feel you made a change and they're not recognizing it and they keep demanding that you show it. But if it's a permanent change, it doesn't matter.

ER: Do you feel that this is part of their continual testing procedure as they egg you on and try to get under your skin?

GG: Yes. Definitely. The frequency with which the staff would egg somebody would directly correspond with the level of reaction they received, or how rebellious they were to the program. A person who was very defensive, who was not willing to look at themselves at all or accept any suggestions, will be egged a lot. A person who was open, who was working on themself, very sincere, honest, going through struggles because when you're working on yourself it's hard, showing that you want to change, that person got very little egging because they didn't need it.

ER: If you had to do it all over again, would you?

GG: If I was in the state I was in before I went into it, yes I would. It helped me in areas I needed help in and I am glad that I went through it for my own sake. I'm glad I'm out of it too. I have to admit that. I am glad I went through it; there were some good times too! Like a burst of insight, where you realize, like Wow! That is very rewarding, and when you finally do get some real confidence in yourself, then that is rewarding, very rewarding.

ER: What are the Violent Offenders Program's bad points?

GG: It is generally geared for the person who is close to release, either going to a minimum or getting out on the street. It cannot do all that much—as much as the program would like to or could do—for people who are coming back in the system for long periods of time such as myself. Like there are things that I would still like to do and I may even head back there near the end.

ER: For a refresher course?

GG: A little bit, yes. See there's some self-disclosing and there's some ... I'd like to really open up ... to really express things I couldn't

really do there given my time, whereas if I was heading out onto the street .... Actually the program would be better on the street. Another bad part is that it is almost impossible to screen out all the people who are just there to scam. And scammers hurt the program because they create a high level of mistrust and apprehension midst the other group members who then do not want to self-disclose. If you get a guy in there who could very well and has shown that he will use that information against you at a later date, you're not very likely to open up. That is disastrous for a group and we had that happen a couple of times. Then I think the nurses could be better trained; you have some very unqualified people in there along with the qualified ones who are experienced and have a good level of caring. And some are there only for the paycheque. I'd do away with some of the Catch-22s because they are mind-boggling and actually hamper a guy's therapy because he just gets so confused he gives up.

Generally the staff do have a purpose for these actions but not always. Sometimes it is hard and very confusing. And some guys have problems with no real answers. What do you do? You can only try something and it doesn't work.

ER: Did you see anyone who was turfed out of the program because of their attitude or a behavioural problem, even though they really needed help and were looking for it?

GG: That brings up the questions as to how much they really wanted it. OK? On the surface of the statement, I would say Yes. But the question arises: How much do they really want it? Because if they really wanted it and really wanted to change, then it would have been evident that they were working, that they were really struggling with it. There were guys there who said, "Well ya, I'd like to change," but they weren't willing to put forth the effort.

The people who were turfed out were almost always people who were reactionary. I can only think of one who was not reactionary and he just didn't work. He sat in group and showed ample evidence that he was not there for treatment and that he didn't want to change because he would sit in group and not say much. I think he had a hard time disclosing in front of a group of strangers. That can be hard.

ER: There are a lot of prisoners who I think would require plenty of help, but you can't break down the walls that have been erected over the years in a few months. Is RPC geared to help extreme cases?

GG: Actually they are to some degree, but unfortunately that's when you get into the heavy medication trip.

the music of a refrigerator

the twisted strains
of a harp of beauty
played by hands broken
of beating a wall

the music of a refrigerator
in which a semi-foetal man
hangs from a thread
needled through his buttocks

brush strokes frozen
it's too cold to paint

Gregory Worobets

An Interview with Bill Mackey

by Hendrik Hoekema

Hendrik Hoekema: Bill, tell me a bit about your prison background.

Bill Mackey: Right now I'm starting the fifteenth year of this sentence. I was arrested in 1972 for non-capital murder; in '73 I was found guilty and my sentence started: I was sentenced to life in prison—ten years before parole. I've been in the penitentiary system ever since, with one exception: I was out for five months on day parole, but I was pulled back in because I got high. Prior to this conviction, I had one other sentence of significance. In 1962 I was given six years and five months for armed robbery in Windsor. I got out in January '67, so I did a little over five years on that one. I've had a few other minor scrapes: six months for forgery back in the early '50s; two months for bootlegging; three months for theft under; and three months for possession of one marijuana cigarette. That's the total of my criminal career—about nineteen years of federal time.

HH: What kind of security levels did you experience, since 1973, in this last sentence?

BM: Well, I've been to every federal pen in the Pacific Region. I did eleven months in B.C. Pen before going to Matsqui Institution. I moved there because I was in the University Program at the time—it gave me a bit of credibility. I stayed in Matsqui for four years. In 1977 I finished the University Program and graduated with a B.A. It was decided that I needed a rest, so I was sent to Agassiz Correctional Camp, which no longer exists. I was there about five months and then I was sent back to B.C. Pen because I got pinched for being drunk. I went to William Head Institution in Victoria two months later where I stayed for twenty months. Next I was transferred to Elbow Lake mimimum camp. I was at Elbow for almost a year and I got drunk again and they sent me to Mission Institution where I stayed for four years. During that time I also went to Ferndale for two months because of the alcohol treatment program they had there. I was going out on the street through their Temporary Absence program. This lasted about two months, but I was sent back to Mission, again for getting drunk. I was finally given a day parole to Sumas Centre, where I lasted for five months before I was pulled back in to Matsqui for being high.

I was in Matsqui for about six months and I started to kind of get really screwed up. I slashed up once, then I overdosed on drugs. I really don't know to this day if I was trying to get out of the world, or just crying out for help. Whatever the reason was, I asked to go to RPC because I wanted to look at their substance abuse program for one thing, and I was a little bit worried about myself for the rash actions I'd gone through. I stayed at RPC for thirteen months and went through the Violent Offenders Program. When I finished there, I went to Mountain Institution.

HH: Why are you here at Mountain now?

BM: I've worn myself out everywhere else. When they tried to get me a place to go to from RPC, when they wouldn't take me at Ferndale, they phoned around a few places and nobody wanted me because I was too much of a management problem. I caused too many grievances, too many legal presentations, and just rocked the boat too damn much. I'd gotten high in every place in the province and I guess I burned out my welcome everywhere.

HH: Before we look at the getting high syndrome that you've remarked on a couple of times, you said that you finally went to RPC after slashing up and overdosing. Why did you end up deciding to go to RPC?

BM: I couldn't think of anything else to do. I'd tried everything else. I'd tried to intellectualize it out, tried to plan it out, think it out, and nothing worked. And I'd never been to RPC. It was the only thing I hadn't tried. So I thought I'd give it a try, too.

HH: What kind of programs were you involved in there?

BM: When I first went there, in June of '85, the psychologist who sent me, Dr. Friedman, recommended that I not go to the Violent Offenders Program because, in his opinion, there hadn't been any violence since the day I'd been arrested for non-capital murder, although there had been a few insinuations which I was never charged for inside or out. However, when I got there, there wasn't any room in the Life Skills and the Drug and Alcohol Programs I was supposed to go to. So, I found myself in the Violent Offenders Program.

HH: What did you do in this program?

BM: Well, we had group meetings every day for an hour and a half.

Each day a different person would conduct the group. We'd take turns talking about what we'd been working on: problems, difficulties we've had, and just how we were. We talked about ourselves. The other guys in the group would ask you questions. There would be a short wrap-up, where everybody would give their opinion of your good points and your bad points. Usually they focussed on the bad because it was confrontational therapy.

HH: So it was an attempt at self-counselling, self-therapy?

BM: Exactly. And they'd always have one or two psychiatric nurses who would sit in on the group.

HH: It seems strange that you ended up in a Violent Offenders Program if you were never recommended to be in one.

BM: I guess when I get drunk I get a little nasty, although it's never resulted in any violence. There's been a few insinuations, but I've never been charged. Nevertheless, there are a few people in this system who believe that if I'm drunk or high, I can be very violent. It's a proven fact that when people are drinking they can be violent, but I still didn't feel I needed that program.

HH: So at the age of forty-five you finally decided to do something about your suicidal feelings and substance abuse. Had these problems come to your attention before? Did you see them as deep-seated problems or things that you weren't dealing with effectively?

BM: No. What people always said to me in the system was, "Bill, just stay straight." They'd never suggest I go to RPC.

HH: And you couldn't stay straight?

BM: Oh, I could stay straight, sometimes for two or three months. But then, you know, something would happen and usually something would happen that I didn't like. It would bum me out and I really felt I couldn't handle it if I didn't have a few valium or a few tokes orsomething. I'd never make it to tomorrow morning, and I convinced myself of that, totally.

HH: What kinds of substances did you use?

BM: Before I came to prison, the only substances that I ever abused were alcohol and marijuana. Once I entered prison, there wasn't any

alcohol, at least not in the quantity I seemed to need—unless you made your homebrew, and I'm not really into that. I started getting into other kinds of dope. I did a little heroin. I've done a little bit of speed, mainly pills; you know, valium, tuinols, those type of pills, tranquilizer types or barbiturates.

HH: Anything to get you through the day.

BM: Yeah, right. You hit it right on the spot. And yet for the first few years I was in the penitentiary, I was going to the University Program and that's where all my heart was and my mind. This was the only time there was never any problem with it. I never had a charge for five years until I'd finished and graduated from University inside.

HH: Let's go back to what happened at RPC in the Violent Offender Program.

BM: Well, I really had a lot of difficulty with it. I read the guidelines, the criteria for the program, and it was for guys who go into rages or who collect assorted weapons inside and out and use them. I'm not in that category. I have used a gun before, but that's been the only incident. I don't get enraged. I'll just say "the hell with it" and walk away. When I'm drinking, I can go into a bit of a rage, but it's usually a verbal rage. And so I really resisted their program because I didn't feel I fit there. Most of the guys would literally jump up in the group and whack guys in the head, yell and scream, yell at the nurses. I just don't do things like that.

HH: So there you are—self-contained, mellow, except for certain occasions in your life when you were no longer self-contained.

BM: Yeah. And I resisted a good deal. However, I really feel I gained from RPC, but I feel I gained more by just having a place to go think about my problems without pressure from the outside, like family and dope. I actually needed a year to sit down and have lots of time to think and put things in perspective.

HH: Had you broken up all relationships outside and inside?

BM: I pretty much kept to myself in RPC. My wife and I, at the time, weren't getting along very well because I'd just come back in again. She was getting a bit fed up, although she still visited me: once a month, then once every couple of weeks, then at the end, and right now, once every weekend.

HH: You say this was the only time you have had in your sentence when you were able to sit down and do a little bit of self-searching?

BM: Maybe the only time I'd had a chance, and maybe the only time I'd really wanted to and recognized I needed to. I guess I finally hit rock bottom when I slashed up. I almost lost my family, I was back in prison, and then I overdosed. I had to do something or else I wouldn't have lived. I couldn't see any future. I used to wait to go to sleep at night, then dread waking up every morning. That's not like me. I'm usually a pretty positive person. There just wasn't anything that interested me.

HH: You couldn't do your time anymore?

BM: Exactly.

HH: There seems to be a pattern here: getting high, getting locked up, getting high, getting transferred, getting high. Are you just an addict?

BM: Well, in the general sense of the word, I guess I am. But then again, I never wanted to quit being an addict. I was willing to quit a few times, for the Parole Board, for my wife, for the Correctional Service staff, but at heart, I didn't want to quit, and I didn't think I could. I just thought this is the way my life is and I'll just have to accept it.

HH: Being dependent on something to "pull you through" was the reason to keep on doing this?

BM: Yeah. It solved my problems. I thought it solved my problems.

HH: Didn't you think you could handle this some other way?

BM: That's the strange thing. I was willing to quit because I had to quit. I didn't want to. Deep down I always figured, well, if the situation was better, if I was outside, or didn't have this pressure from my wife, or from the Correctional Service, if I was like an ordinary person, I could sit down and have a few beers. And that's a bunch of bullshit. I'd convinced myself for many years, and I was wrong. I can't have one beer. I used to have an old saying that the only way I could drink safely was to give me one bottle of beer and take me twenty miles into the bush. But I was bullshitting myself. Because if you took me into the bush with one beer, the minute it was open, I'd walk twenty miles out to get the second one. I finally know that now for sure and I'm admitting it.

HH: Do you think that by admitting this to yourself you've come to some conversion, some change? Why should anyone believe you?

BM: Oh, definitely, I'd admit it to other people before because that was what I was supposed to say to get out. So naturally I said it.

HH: OK, but what's the difference between saying it now in terms of the way that you think about yourself?

BM: Well, I really believe it now, because I've gone through it and I know. In the old days, it was if you get high, Bill, you'll come back to jail. Now, if I get high, I won't live. It's a case of life and death. The last time when I was out at Sumas, I got so high they almost had to carry me out on a stretcher. The doctor's report to the Parole Board said that if I hadn't been brought back to Matsqui, I wouldn't be alive today. It's reached the point now where it's no longer just a case of staying out. I have to keep sober to live.

HH: This insight that came to you, how did it come about?

BM: I'd known about it a long time, I just didn't want to admit it because I was too comfortable playing the little game. I never woke up one morning and had the key. I didn't go away from RPC like you hear of so many guys: "See, Jack, he's got the key, he's a graduate from the program." That's a lot of bullshit. You don't wake up one morning and it's all there. You have to suffer to get it. And I think I suffered enough to get it.

HH: But I'm sure that you've been interviewed and counselled and gone through therapy and people have told you all of this before?

BM: I wasn't listening because I didn't want to listen. I wasn't ready yet. I always believed that next time will be different.

HH: Beat the system?

BM: Right. The only person I was beating was Bill. I could have been out of here eight years ago. The reason I'm not is, I never did anything for Bill before. Oh, I did a lot of greedy things for Bill, but I was staying sober for someone else. They'd say—I've heard this in AA for six years, but now I know what they really mean—you can't stay sober for someone else. You have to do it for yourself. And I do it for myself now.

HH: It's often said that prisoners learn how to intellectualize their problems, how to give all the right answers to their supposed problems.

BM: They sure do. I'm an expert at it. I see it every time I read my files. The way that the prison tends to deal with it now is to say: forget intellectualization—what is your emotional response to this?

HH: I'm curious about how you view this. Can you deal with a problem intellectually to the point where you see a new set of answers which just cover up the same problem, or must there be some kind of emotional change?

BM: Emotional change came when I came back to prison and I felt, I knew, that I didn't belong here any more. I didn't come home any longer. There wasn't eighteen guys rushing to my cell with a handful of dope, and if there were, it wouldn't have made it any better. I just said, "I'd blown it!" All of a sudden I realized it was my fault.

HH: So you've come through some kind of self-recognition. How has that changed your way of doing time? You've just spent thirteen months at RPC. What has changed for you in terms of attitude or behaviour?

BM: The way I did my time before was by bucking the system. I got my ups by putting them down, and I was good at it. Grievances—I could drag a grievance out all day long with them because I know the Commissioner's Directives backwards. And Inmate Committees. I've always been on an Inmate Committee in every institution I've been in except here at Mountain. I made a vow to myself before I came that when I finished RPC, no matter where I went, whether it was a minimum camp, whether it was here, or Mission, I would not do any grievances, even for myself, I'd give no legal advice, and I'd stay off Inmate Committees. Instead, I talk to people. When I had problems out in the street on day parole, I'd never talk to my Parole Officer or the guy at the Correctional Centre or Halfway House. I just didn't have any trust. But somehow I'm starting to break that down. I'll go talk to my counsellor when I've got problems, and I think I could do the same with my Parole Officer. Go talk to them and use them as resource people, rather than try to solve it myself, the way that I always used to solve it—by getting high. So maybe the whole thing has been worth the effort.

HH: Tell me a bit more about RPC. You went through a period of

quietness; it sounds like "soul-searching." Is there anything that happened in that process which you think might have influenced some of the decisions that you made about the way you're doing your time now?

BM: Well, in a way I was kind of coerced into doing my time this way. I don't think I did it voluntarily. I had a great big rude awakening. Over at RPC, a lot of guys are looked down on by the other guys. This mentality was pushed further by the nurses because in the groups, you're actually expected to finger guys. They call it confronting, but it really comes down to fingering. You're supposed to tell what guys are doing, to confront them, to tell them they're lying in the group, to tell what they're doing in their cells. I really didn't think that stuff was important. They bring a guy in and "test" him. When they put him on the spot he has to defend himself, and he learns how to defend himself in an "acceptable" way. I just felt that you could be a "good citizen" without being a stool pigeon. Maybe I was wrong. You're forced to live with guys that you don't like, to talk and listen with guys that you don't like. It did something to me. I'm not so judgmental of people now. I don't, right away, walk in a room full of guys and start putting them into certain categories. It's not that I like a lot of the things the guys do, but it doesn't affect me anymore. I'm going to have to live my life for me.

HH: Criminals are often said to be egocentric. When you say, "I'm doing this for myself," it sounds egocentric. Is there a difference?

BM: I really think there is. The last time, at RPC, I had to fight to get into the substance abuse program and I learned more than in all the years I'd taken it before because all of a sudden I was doing something I wanted to do. Not because I was ordered to. When I talked to the Transfer Board some months ago about how I was planning to stay sober, one of them said: "We never heard you mention anybody but yourself, Bill. How about your family? Howabout the other people in your life?" I said, hold it, I'm not discounting them at all. The first thing I have to do is stay straight, get a job and stay out of prison. When I live a normal life like that, the people close to me, the ones I love, are naturally going to reap the benefits because I'll be working steady and I'll be out of jail. So it's not like I'm doing this just for Bill. Other people will reap the benefits, but first I have to stay straight.

not striving

not striving
for righteousness of God
for harmony w/ nature
not striving

no wish to hear you
unless you sigh
or laugh madly
at me
at you

if I get an erection
we may share some time
if you stretch like a cat
and sleep as I talk
I'll love you
as I love myself
for I'll draw breath
for my song

or, leave me to me
I am sustained
by my own sense
of inconsequence
there is no more
don't confuse me
w/ the banality
of ambition

sing for me
nonsense syllables
from an untamed tone row

Gregory Worobets

Peeler

I

Sitting in a cheap hotel room, up on the fourth floor, down at the end of the hall in some tired small town hotel where it never fails that some are better than others—but none of them are ever really good—quality being reserved for the paying guests. Perched like some freckled and defoliated bird on a sad and retired kitchen chair, gazing at my reflection that stares back at me from the tarnished bevelled mirror standing like a guard on the depression-style vanity: a scarred bureau, its face stamped by decades of cigarette burns, white circled water rings, dust and yawning age. Jars of cosmetics, concealing creams—the tools of the trade—expensive magic wands designed to transform whores into princesses—children into women—women into dreams. I light another cigarette, blow smoke rings at the nude girl smiling faintly sardonic back at me from the frame of glass. I have to wonder: is she really me? I slip another tape into the jaws of the machine, turn up the heat on the iron, picture what costumes I am going to wear, try to decide how the music will flow, ponder if the beat matches the rhythm the zippers and hooks will demand when they fall from my pale skin like autumn leaves drifting and dying from dark crooked fall trees. I hold a drink in one hand and a paint brush in the other. In front of me glow odd colours for my palette lying eager on the cluttered dresser top, waiting for their daily stage debut—psychological camouflage—thin layers of paint serving more purpose than mere facial decoration—also hiding the thoughts of the host—a fragile barrier to the watching men: a shifting force field of crimson, magenta and cobalt blue.

II

Minutes saunter by as time runs out, snap last minute hooks and eyes, step into high three inch heels, dance a bit around the room to see if the ensemble gives just the right impression; but an impression of what? Youth or beauty or sensuality? No—just confirmation of all the individual responses to this role. A chameleon's answer to the voyeur's observations: no one view is correct—no fantasy exactly the same. No one sees the same thing or desires the same person that lives and breathes beneath the facade of make-up, perfume, tattered silk or gaudy sequins: the armour of the stripper. Snatch up the key, pat the

hair into place, hide again the scimitar gleam of the safety pin that holds you together, tuck a once-white rug under your arm, pick up the canned music, gather all your forces together, head for the door. Wind down the dimly lit hallways—going to work with a professional smile pasted cynically on your scarlet mouth—glide silently through doorways, swing through kitchens where bewildered Chinese cooks stare vacantly over your head as you stare over theirs—into the bar where middle-aged waiters leer after your passage and blowzy gum-chewing bartenders and half-drunk women whisper nasty comments at your back. "Show Time, Folks!" Just another tour of duty in a battlefield of beer glasses and dirty ashtrays—another hitch in a war of morals where the peeler is criticized for being a professional soldier—put down for taking on her commission when it is really the watching audience who is responsible for the skirmish: they are the ones in error here, watching with their murky thoughts drowned in rye.

III

I have to restrain myself from laughing as I make my way up to the stage. Sometimes that held-in laughter is angry and sometimes it is a clever defence: none of these fools understanding that my economics, my reasons for being here are not any different than theirs as they work out their lives packing hams at Swift's, ruin their hands and dreams washing dishes, or tiredly sling beer in some crummy tavern lost in the middle of nowhere. We all have children to raise and bills to pay. Once on my stage, when the music starts, I give myself over to the sound of the melody, let the beat of bass and drum remove me from the enforced sordidness of this, my job only. Despite the disparity in talent or beauty, most of us enjoy the dancing, and the distance that separates us from the clumsy legless ones that stare up at our moving patterns and mock the differences that separate us, like a lack of clothes. I move on the platform practicing coy calisthenics supposedly guaranteed to send school boys to confessionals burgeoning with violent sexual guilt and to deliver half-cut husbands home to their angry wives to chase them around the kitchen while they dream of someone else forty pounds lighter and twenty years younger. Down to the last song: "Fucking the Carpet" is what I call it but the boss says that it's called the "Floor Show." Somehow the semantics involved are not so different, more similar than he claims to know, but I am just a bit blunter, more direct in my observations, and I don't have to go to church on Sunday: I'm on a bus between towns sleeping. When you are weary or hungry there is no time to waste on moral posturings.

IV

The set is over. Now applause and thinly disguised lust combat their way for recognition. I smile and with a small wave dismiss them like errant school children but it all goes over their heads—even the slight sneer strikes them as something desirable. I turn my back, shrug on a Japanese kimono, the dragon on the back is a talisman against the ranks of mindless idiots with too much time on their hands. I make my way through the drunks, politely turning down offers of free drinks or drugs and casual sex whispered to my passing thighs by lonely truck drivers with dirty fingers. On my way out the door a table of bikers catches my eye: we understand each other, for the trips behind preconceived delusions shoved at you because your clothes or lifestyle create strange bedfellows and odd allies. I'll probably drop back later, for a drink, for a little conversation, for a little sanity. But you can't always trust appearances. Sometimes there lurks the mind of a small town moralist beneath the colours, jeans and beard; bike grease hiding the thoughts of fools, or another little boy dressed up in someone else's clothes—playing at being different, having an adolescent idea that it's cool, better to ride on two wheels instead of four. Too insecure to be alone, he spends his time in make believe, just another washed out "wannabe." You have to be wary of imposters, but there are times that you find those others who are just who they appear to be and comfortable in their knowledge of their identity—those who know their clothes are symbols only and like mine are a carnival mask to live behind. These fleeting encounters make up the best of your moments in a life on the road.

V

Another show over, back up the long stairs to my dank room, remove all traces of makeup, towel off the sweat and throw myself on the bed to stare up at the cracked and peeling ceiling—another notch on my pay cheque—one less visual assault to go through this week—one day closer to home. Rising from the bed and walking to the mirror I look and decide: not too bad for an old broad. At twenty-nine I am getting too old for this business. It is a young girl's trade but it is the older ones who last the longest: stoic veterans with no visible wounds or obvious amputations. But they are there, yes, they are there in the form of lost innocence and dreams, ruined reputations and discarded relationships. I go through my suitcases—what to do? Eat? No. Go for a drink? No. Conversation? No. I pull a cigarette from the pack, put it back, light a joint instead, swallow some valium. The day is over—what needs to be done? Wash the costumes, press them, hang

them up, tidy the dresser and its contents for the next day's work, run the empty coffee cups down the endless stairs to the kitchen, gather up the dirty towels for the maid, then straighten the bed and empty the overfull ashtrays, into the shower to remove the soil of the day then back to the bed where I let an old movie lull me while I rub my feet and paint my nails or bandage the aching blisters on my toes before crawling under the covers in exhaustion and loneliness. Another day gone, another day gone ... nothing to think of at the end of a long day besides marking the days and counting the calendar of my life spent in hotels or on buses while I survive. Another day.

Diana Hartley

Postcard

I received today in the mail a picture
on a card lady white throat gleaming
full lips vampire red pursed open
over the trembling ochre cork waiting
breathless deep green bottle hiding
ruthless phallic intentions inside it
soft black curved brushes of eyelashes
tracing sombre grey rainbows upon
pale skin ivory honey cheek bones
oyster shell carnivorous teeth
flash cruel hard reflections the bowed
carmine head sad and dying rose
plunged like a sacrifice in the heart
empty glass standing silent like an old
forgotten promise spilling refracted colour
the motion of fresh blood that flows
like tears from the torn wounded petals
Is it only my imagination wondering
there is no resemblance between us.

Diana Hartley

The Pen of W.A.K.

Prisons have always been an important stimulus in literature. Five hundred years ago, Sir Thomas Malory published La Morte d'Arthur, *which he had written while imprisoned for armed assault and rape, and the work of such prison-writers as Dostoevsky, Cervantes, Serge, and Wilde are well documented. Thoreau's writings were profoundly affected by a single night spent in jail, and possibly his view of "seeing the world through a window" best sums up the inspiration behind writing in prison. That window has opened in Kent.*

At Kent Maximum in 1986, several writers got together and created a writing workshop. Steve Reid, the unofficial spokesman of the W.A.K. (Writers' Anonymous of Kent) group, has recently published his first novel, Jackrabbit Parole *and acts as an inspiration to the less experienced members of the workshop. As writing is a private affair, in prison that condition is magnified and, outside of academia, there is little external energy supporting the aspiring writer. The workshop at Kent has grown and drawn in many men who are writing letters, poetry, short stories, or major projects such as novels or scripts. The SFU/Kent Student Council has arranged funding to bring in outside authors and authorities for weekly workshops on writing. Some of the authors who have led sessions, or are planning to in the near future, are Dave McFadden, Brian Fawcett, D.M. Clark, Andreas Schroeder, Temple Maynard, Chris Bruyere, Bill Deverell, and W.D. Valgardson. The workshop caught the attention of the news media, particularly the* Sun *newspaper, which missed the essence in its article but was generally positive.* Western Report *magazine, however, twisted the efforts of the workshop to conform to a right-wing perspective, giving a platform to those who would bring back the chain-gangs. Unfortunately, journalists and literary people who haven't experienced the suffocating grasp of prison life, of being submerged in its cynical and bitter hopelessness, have a romanticized vision of writing behind prison fences. The intensity that symbolizes prison and the time to direct that intensity through the pen should be conducive to producing powerful literature. However, the overwhelming sterile mediocrity of 1980s Canadian prisons is a writer's worst enemy.*

Prison can be a time for reducing experience into literary forms and, in the absence of external imagery, of developing a more vivid imagination. Everyone has a story to tell; most people simply don't know how to do it effectively. In the Workshop, the tools of better writing are developed; the ability to see everything in literary terms is taught; and the discipline, dedication and discovery of one's self that are necessary for successful writing are pursued. The result has

been better writing within Kent Maximum.

... Darkness oozed out from between the bricks, through the tangled maze; the darkness, mysterious and seemingly invincible. But a tremendous light flares as a cool breeze flicks open the door to the room. The room of W.A.K. is a sanctuary. Half a dozen men sit around two tables, their rumpled, faded green clothing less obtrusive than usual, even though the room is brightly lit. The men are talking, reading, smoking, but thinking. Gathered here formally in its informality, this group is sharing energy, focussing on the organization of thoughts, experiences, and imagination into some form of literary coherence. Half a dozen men: some published, some working on being published, and others just writing for themselves, their families, or that unseen professor of a special prep course (Health 101: Transcending the Pork Diet); but all are interested in the art of manipulating different literary forms.

"Barb-wire, for fuck's sake! God, these *Sun* photographers have this romantic affinity with backgrounds of barb-wire and guard towers. How dramatic!" says Cool Breeze to no one in particular, folding the newspaper and passing it to Big Dave, seated beside him. Dave glances at the headline: "Kent Prisoners sweat out trial of learning to write"; and holds up the accompanying photograph of four writers leaning on an "Out of Bounds" sign for the rest of the group to see.

"I'm going back to being a gangster," jokes Steve Reid, slumping back in his chair with somewhat of a tired smile. "There's no prestige in being a poet at Kent!" "That would probably make the Parole Board happy," says Casey, a hint of bitterness clouding his intellectual wit. "At least then you would fit into one of their charts." The newspaper rustles and changes hands. Dave looks up and his wide-toothed grin melts somewhat as he begins to speak.

"You know, gentlemen, an article like this can be dangerous because it over-romanticizes the role of writing in prison. Everybody, inside or outside, has a story to tell. Subtly, this reporter makes the 'Rob a bank, write a book, make a movie and become a millionaire' scenario seem easier than more conventional stories. The point is missed."

"So what is the point, Dr. D.?" asks Bob, as he turns to face his huge friend.

"It's the story, Bojo, not the storyteller ...."

"Exactly, Dave," interrupts Bob, jabbing the air with an index finger. "And this newspaper writer is no different than any other writer, with the exception that his audience demands sensationalism.

Experience and imagination, Big G. That's where it's at. So he met a group of guys in prison, writing and generating a lot of positive energy around writing, and he wrote an interesting story based on that, a story his readers will buy. Whether it's totally true or not isn't really relevant."

"Anyway, Dave, what is 'true'?" adds Casey, somewhat sarcastically, his eyes glistening like a coyote's. "What makes you feel good!"

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," smiles Jack as he emerges from the corner like an old hockey player getting up for his last shift. "And that is all ...."

"Yeah, yeah, Jack. Very profound!" says Dave, his powerful voice a little softer now, almost bored. "Is it true that Steve's main problem is really only in getting the administration to let the TV cameras into the joint to promote his book???"

"OK, so it's a little exaggerated," interjects Joe, cynicism outbalancing his poetic talents. "But it's more positive than almost all articles about anything in prison will be. Look at this other piece of shit. It starts with 'Kent Institution may be the ultimate writers' colony,' progresses through a lot of nonsense of how good we have it here, and ends with 'But we should work prisoners and work them hard until they pay back their debt to society. Let them write in the evenings after a hard day's work. We have to turn these parasites into responsible people.' This must be true, n'est-ce pas?" He flung the magazine to the floor in disgust, his thick eyeglasses not hiding his anger, an anger churned by too many years on this side of the fence.

"What are you getting so excited about, Joe! That article is simply part of the existing political philosophy in this country," says Jack, circling the net with the puck firmly in front of him. "In fact, it was written by the editor before the reporter even came here. The reporter actually wrote a positive story; over-romanticized but positive. He was quite concerned that Dave must have a problem keeping the boys away with his 'uncommon good-looks'!"

"It's all true!" laughs Steve. "And it's all fiction! And that is all ye need to know ...."

The sixties live with the arrival of novelist D.M. Clark. The down-to-earth and friendly bear of a man relaxes the workshop immediately. No introduction is needed, for everyone in the room is intimately acquainted with Figgy of *The Sunshine Man*. The man hasn't sold out, and the financial wasteland that greets non-recognition can't distract his spirit, or that of the Workshop, yet.

"My latest book is going to make it ..." says Clark, his bushy beard not hiding his confidence.

The problems of the moment fade into the background as every

thing seems a little clearer. "These days, when I read about good bank jobs," says Steve, "it's only more material for another story ...."

"Hands-on workshop," and in walks Dr. Temple Maynard, an SFU English and creative writing professor. "Use pictures to develop scenes," he suggests. The session ends with a project to write chapters for a book that many different authors have contributed to.

"... anything but killing somebody else's characters. It's not polite!" says Dr. Maynard, quite the perfect English country schoolteacher, perhaps from another Kent across the Atlantic.

"What's your book about?" he asks Cool Breeze.

"Well," starts Cool Breeze, waxing eloquent. "It's a novel, a story of the journey of the soul through the noise and haste of life, the degradation of the spirit amid the madness of the temporal, the debauchery of the flesh through sensory saturation, and the enchanting imagery of an exhilarating fatalism of points east. It's a story of how people, places and things become intertwined in a delicate dance of life. It's a story of love and hate, of fear and fascination, of inspiration and wonder, of a salute to the sun, and the moon. It's, it's ..." Cool Breeze pauses, a grin playing around the corner of his mouth. "Shit, the media already see it as an exotic tale of an international dope deal and the flighty glitter of the fast lane life that surrounds it ...."

"Sounds good," smiles Dr. Maynard. "My latest is about a jewel heist in Bolivia!"

The music continues, and the moment is full of poets, authors, and dreamers hidden away in the Fraser Valley writing and writing and writing ... "Miami Vice." Casey? In comes scriptwriter Chris Bruyere, and leads a dynamic workshop on writing for the screen. This man has had a humble beginning, and relates easily to everyone here, presenting his success as very accessible, and enticing all with the huge amount of money available for screen ideas and projects. "A scriptwriter must have conviction!" says Bruyere, almost keeping a straight face. A dozen scriptwriters with convictions are born .... "We don't fund readings or workshops not open to the general public," announces the Canada Council. "No problem," assures the Writers' Union. "If you're on the planet, and you write, we'll fund you!" The former is questionable, but we'll take the funding, Thank You.

John suddenly realizes there is a use for a Bic pen other than inhaling hashish smoke, and he begins the hunt for the refill .... In fact, none of the prison-writers of history have anything over this group, with the possible exception that they probably didn't have word-processors in the Russian prison-camps of yesteryear ....

The move is made to re-start the prison newspaper under a more literary and less confrontational banner, an editor is hired, and a

request for a pass for Casey to cover a writers' conference downtown denied. The C.S.C. is not noted for their sense of humour .... "You and your writer friends don't impress me, Hatfield," says the keymaster of transfers. "Don't think that just because you're a writer you're not getting a fair hearing," say the gods of parole. "In fact, one of Canada's most important literary voices is sitting on this very board. But your crimes are hideous, Mr. Abadan. You bank robbers are parasites on a decent society...." The speaker pauses as he is nudged. "Wrong speech," whispers the other board member. "This guy's the dope dealer ...."

Author Andreas Schroeder doesn't talk about *Shaking It Rough* here, as men who have spent more time in remand than his eight months in jail tend to be unfairly cynical. But he does talk about *Dustship Glory* and writing in general, and lends inspiration to the budding "men of letters" of the Workshop.

The illustrious Smurf announces that W.A.K. Headquarters is being moved to Greece. The fat old editor in the corner bubbles with laughter, his voice drowning out the background noise.

"What disastrous splendour has succeeded the simplicity of ignorance? What is this strange language? What is the meaning of all this nonsense? Madmen, what have you done? Have you, O literalists of the imagination, made yourselves slaves of the frivolous pen you have conquered?"

Now it's my turn to laugh, as soundless words form on my lips. "The power of writing; of removing thinking from essence, of scrambling experience and imagination, and of penetrating the boundaries separating everything we know about ourselves and the world, and the part we don't deal with; that power has connected us with everything else that has any meaning at all ...."

The curtain drops and another day in the life of W.A.K. is over. Tomorrow it will begin all over again, and the voices of Steve Reid and the others will become stronger and clearer. The writers' workshop at Kent is only the beginning.

Bob Marshall
Mission Institution

My Wife

Is it right you say you'd die for me?
Is it right you bring your mother to haunt me?
Is it right you slave over a cauldron for me?
Is it right you drag me from the tavern in the wee hours of the morning?
Is it right you pamper me like an infant?
Is it right you tell me how to command my car?
Is it right you add to our financial income?
Is it right you compare me to others?
Is it right you run a laundrymat in our basement?
Is it right you aim the frying pan at my head?
Is it right you take the major responsibility for our offspring?
Is it right you organize our living room to your taste?
Is it right you toil against the dust upon the floor?
Is it right you take ownership of my credit?
Is it right you visit me in the hospital?
Is it right you take half of me in the event of divorce?
Is this why they call you my wife?

George L. Taylor
Stony Mountain Prison

A Student's Point of View

Since July of 1985, I have written several articles about the on-site university program at the Stony Mountain Penitentiary. Most of these articles have been in response to statements printed in the *Winnipeg Free Press*—statements from citizens who will not understand why university programs should exist in prisons. When I am writing an article in response to these people, I have no difficulty whatever in deciding what to say. This article, however, has become a real headache. I know what I want to say; I just do not seem able to say it in an acceptable manner.

My first attempt at writing this was too forceful. The second was boring beyond belief and the third was too insulting. All the attempts in between, and there were several, were too frustrating to continue. This is to be my final attempt, and I will give it my best endeavour, although it is very difficult to remain diplomatic after a full year of dealing with people who have allowed their emotions to cloud their better judgement.

I truly believe that the reason for my difficulty in preparing this article lies in the fact that most of the people who will be reading it already know the value of on-site university programming in prisons. It is extremely unlikely that I will impart any new knowledge to these people. That does not mean, though, that this article will not be read by some who know very little about the program, and I sincerely hope they will read what is written here with an open mind.

For too long our society has operated under the belief that punishment is the only answer to crime. This belief is clung to probably more from bitterness than from any real conviction that punishment works. All we need do to see that it does not work is to look at our nation's recidivism rate among released offenders. The government's own figures place it at approximately fifty percent nation-wide. That figure, however, is low because it does not include the released men who complete their paroles before re-offending. These men are recidivists too and when they are included in the figure it jumps to approximately eighty percent nation-wide. It should be clear from these figures that punishment alone is not the answer.

If we can agree that we need something more than punishment alone, then the only other area that needs to be agreed upon is what that something else should be. Now, this is just a suggestion, but a good place to begin might be with programs designed to help the offender make the changes necessary to become a productive member of the community. These programs should have a strong potential for rehabilitation and should be set up so that those who are not sincere

about making changes are quickly weeded out. Those who are sincere should be able to gain a sense of self-worth and accomplishment from the programs. They should be placed in situations that cause them to think beyond the limits they have placed upon themselves. In other words, there should be a program that breaks the "mind-set" that brought the men to prison in the first place. In addition, this program should provide the offender with something he can use when he is released, such as social skills and a foundation for further growth.

The benefits from this program should extend to society as well. The program should see more offenders remaining out of prison. If the recidivism rate is reduced, then we have fewer victims from repeat crime. If fewer offenders are returning to prison, there is a savings in taxes, since the released offender will now be paying them, instead of living off them. This actually sounds pretty good so far. I hope we are in agreement to this point.

We only have one problem now: Where do we find this program, and what will we call it? I have another suggestion. Let's find it at the local university and let's call it an on-site university program. We will let it teach offenders to work, not only with each other but with the university as well, to promote change. Will it work? You bet it will; it already has.

The *Parlett, Ayers Report* has suggested that this program can reduce recidivism among those who attend by as much as two-thirds. Studies sponsored by the Solicitor General's Office have agreed that this program helps to reduce recidivism. What will it take to convince the public? I thought the general idea was to have fewer victims of crime, not more. Have we finally reached a point in our society where the offenders care more about protecting future victims than society does? Now just might be a good time for the taxpayers to make certain that Corrections Canada does its job in providing programs like the on-site university. It will be through programs such as this one that society's safety will be more assured after the offender's release.

The time has arrived to set bitterness aside and work for a common goal, because the biggest losers so far have been the victims. We can do something about that, so let's at least try.

James Motherall
Stony Mountain Prison

Lynda

We were two dogs in heat that first night—
we did not make love,
though afterwards we pretended,
prolonging the inevitable.

You, with your little girl insecurities
and big girl games, reached out
and clung to me like napalm.
I, the Woody Allen of the Protestant set,
guilt-obsessed, orally-fixated,
hung in there.

Wasting years, we played out our
Ken and Barbie bullshit fantasies,
faking smiles, laughter and orgasms.
We were children with our fingers on the trigger,
playing wargames, playing house.

Our promises of forever were a lie:
once bright flowers,
since pissed upon
and rotting in the compost.

If we'd only seen it sooner,
we could have saved ourselves much pain.
But maybe, just perhaps,
that's all we ever had,
and in some sick, neurotic way,
all we ever wanted.

Les Merson
Mountain Prison

Reflections of a Short Career in the Mission Prison Factory

No hope for an industrial machine. The job is never completed. Numbed, calmed in the slow fall. Sargassan curls of routed woodchaff spill off the platform onto the cement. Beds for the Army. Inserted inside: three drawers apiece. Specified maple, jointed, grooved and glued; one size. In a cool, pale grain.

Four hundred and seventy routed edges. One moment, I am robust worker: see how smooth it flows, my hand's smooth motion, the warm grace of natural lines. We are a marvellous creation. At another shuffle, I'm the fool. Robotman. Bobo. Strapped into this blunt choice: a machine the engineers haven't developed a cheaper machine to replace. So I confront my personal worth.

One hundred and twenty-five boards sized and sawed. Motion pared to the efficient. Lift, swing, step, hold, push, lean back, step back, bend, lift. The Dance of the Preying Mantis. Steel toes chafe the fine bones of my feet. It takes all of us to make the factory hum. "How's it goin' John?" Good workers get more jobs. Two hundred and twenty-six beds for the Officer's Training Unit-CFB Chilliwack. In CORCAN terminology, there is a private contract.

... SandingMaster. We serve you. I place what you expel. Your appetite is involuntary. Your desire mechanical. We, in your service, replace your grit when it is worn. You hum exultant as you grind the grain. Slim sticks, head to head, slip from your vulva, well smoothed. Rubbed wooden shanks, they fall, dry as powder, from my hands. To neat ordered rows. Switch the pallets, and the sticks are pushed through, rubbed smaller, again, until ... as drawer sides, they slide in frictionless, well fitted, familiar.

"This is a work-oriented institution." The Mission mantra of official faith. "You have been arbitrarily assigned to the factory." Unspoken: the balance of behaviourist controls: Refusal to work is a charge, first conviction (a fine); secondary effects: loss of Private Family Visits, transfers delayed; continued recalcitrance, charge, second conviction (placement in punitive segregation, i.e., the hole, pending negative transfer to a higher security institution). Overhead permanent threat: denial of release, freedom. "Your institutional performance indicates an attitudinal maladjustment ...."

A year to pass through the planer. Till I'm smooth as a drawer. The little clock races across the factory floor. Twists past my stiff boots. Orders tumble into the roaring gaps between our earphone silence. Nod like a drill press. Why not obey? Easy and safe. The efficient

noise-dampers blank the fierce scream of blade ripping tree flesh. We are muted. Accustomed to the worker's boredom. Prepared for release.

Pour in a calm summer's day.

... Autosuck.

The Beltsander. That smell of a dentist drilling teeth. Sense of science boring my head. No pain. Don't care. The silence of "Off." The odor of organic material being worn away. Fill in my frontal lobes with this illusion of mechanical immortality.

... By the third day my retreat has become strategic, historic. I skulk behind the machine. Hold my energy close. Scribble these furtive notes. When they can't see, a little tension is off the strings. Urge on the clock like a spectator. Cheat on the minutes. In flight.

Factory Zen. The awareness of consciousness interred by the repetition of the oblivious moment.

Herded to the Buffalo 18 Blower Drillpress. The fourth day of rotation. Mesmerized by the spinning drillbit. The surfaces must be flush. The head of the screw must be below the visible plane. Drillhead anti-clockwise, my head clockwise: together we reach an apparent stasis in the slow fall of galaxies of dust.

Template change. Reverse slat direction. Spin out the drilled breakthrough splinters. A joke: I've got a ten year sentence as a general helper, 333-23-3E, Cabinet Shop. Four dollars and twenty-five cents Canadian a day. The maximum benefit of my incarceration. One of the criteria for release.

CORCAN: Corrections Canada. CORCAN: their factory unit stamp name. COR CAN COR CAN COR CAN ...

... Push it. Pull it, whines the Dedo blade. Cuts a smooth groove down the center. Adjustable for depth. This time I imagine the demand as exercise: it's a way I can explain it to myself that makes the motion acceptable. The same pallet filled over and again. With little wooden bodies. Each cycle, another skin removed. A perfect Zen fall into the stack.

The fifth day. Somehow the sandpaper rubbing at this drawer's edge reminds me of wet dog fur. Over my shoulder, the belt sander shines the bones of the drawers, its long ugly tongue racing to a circular eternity. My skin is soft. I am afraid.

Our positions are rotated to correspond to production needs. Hand sanding is a settled task. At its own pace, give or take a few minutes. When you are the entire machine, you don't see the machine. Arborite drawer fronts smoothed every shift.

Flimsy cloth gloves split in the seams baring my fingertips. No one else wears gloves. The less contact I have with the work, the less involved I feel. A little delusion. Breath-masked, face-plated, gloved

and ear-phoned, the immediacy is gone. Like the Enola-Gay dropping Big Boy from altitude fifteen thousand feet.

The day is sucked up the blowerpipes.

It is amazing how silent I have become. I don't talk to anyone. They are the same as me. They sprawl, like I do, on the work during the breaks. They hide in the washroom like I want to. They laugh suddenly in the din and startle me. We have everything in common, but there is no camaraderie, no shared spirit. If I talk, this condition becomes my community, and I want to stay a stranger to it.

"Fill in the knotholes and every crack with surfacing putty." Maple coloured. The wood was alive. I am alive. What am I being filled with?" Scrape off the excess—it dries fast—and re-sand." Afterwards they use compressed air to blow off the dust. "If it is done right you can't even see the changes."

... End of shift. "You can go home now," says the fem voice from every corner of the high ceiling. It is not the end of my daze. A supervisor stalks out and corrals several workers. With pink copies of Excellent Performance Notices. The last to quit, the first to start, are rewarded. The hint, unspoken, that they may add up, like good works, to suitability for day parole (parole itself is rarely granted this decade). I stumble out under the sun, glad it still hurts. Shift over.

Through the metal-detector, when they rub their soft hands over us, feeling for rough edges. "Proceed immediately back to your cells for afternoon count."

Glittering sheets of thick paper blown across the work table like pulled-out pages from some indecipherable book in Braille. Fingertips rubbed raw in the attempt to read. Number 80 Garnet Abrasive paper, another 3M product. Still don't understand but you get used to it. And that's the worst part. Or the saving grace.

Another day. Discipline. Bench order. Flight to dream daze. Hands on erotic hardwood. I sit and sand, lean, sand and primitive rhythms, swell and sand. Slip away to sensual buzz of submission to brownshirt guards. Worker's costless astral travel. To the dark side of the Tiber, conspirator's shadows, guttered wine bottle candles, the open air, then I try to touch my feet together but I cannot; they're blunted in these stiff iron boots.

Industries' Goals and Objectives: [B] "Simulate, to the greatest extent possible, free world industrial conditions ...."

... Yellow complaint form filed. Against the world. But it's destined for the circular file. The Assistant-Warden Industries prays to "Productivity": it is his reason to exist. There will be no induction safety sessions (to identify machines hazardous to human beings, body and mind); no Industrial First Aid courses (it's always safe in our firm embrace) so ... bloody finger nubs left on a pressplate, minds on the

hum. "It was his own fault!" A mean little man, intent like a rat, in his busy dark hole.

Every minute shirked, is time saved, in that, at least, it hasn't been given to them. Still a steady retreat. Up on the surface the papers complain: Our industrial machine can't compete in the race to produce. Japanese progress is superior to our own, faster, a cultural caste group efficient, superior production, better labour relations, more robotization ... shun, shun, shun, the engines hum.

Outside at the workshop for the mentally retarded, the workers, clients, residents, prisoners will sand the same slope. Till countermanded. Till the chair arm is sanded right through. Officially described as Normalization. The new emphasis, here and there, is the same: Productivity, Normalization, Order, Discipline.

I look longingly at the warnings on the little can of surfacing putty: "Keep Well Away from open flame and spark." Naptha, Acetone, Spartacus, Ludd, Molly Maguire, Burn, Flames, Fire.

Twelfth Day. SandingMaster's mouth is open again. I stuff the orifice. So full of planks it spasms. Whines. Shudders to a stop. Gauges red-lined. Its supervisor-priest scuttles over, pants. "That was too much. Only one at a time." He strips open the control panel. A deep city circuitry road-wire bridge-switch development. Gingerly pokes at a series of buttons. "Wrong touch and you're fried." He's even nervous.

I am learning.

They transfer me to hanging drawers inside the final assembled product. The bed and couch combination. Varnished shiny for the warehousemen to strap and pack. Strap and pack, ten beds a day.

Power screwdriver. Air-pressure staple gun. Hand-held heavy duty finishing sander. Superman accessories. On first squeeze the screw breaks the pre-drilled hole, splinters the wood, fractures the drawer frame. I don't know my own strength.

There is some sense powerful to this hand-controlled vital machinery. My arm times a hundred. Power button. So when I return to sanding board corners by hand I am again that patient human burro, limited, tired—I rest from the superhuman speed-fantastic. The heavy duty sander beckons, squat and hunched, a cartoon alien ready to vibrate me into powerworld.

When a young bravo told me he had sawn and planed one thousand board feet of lumber in one shift for the production record in the shop, I knew I had to change workmates.

The prisoner-worker explanations: "I do it to keep busy. I go crazy if I didn't have something to do." "It makes the time go by faster." "The weekends are boring without work." "Keeps me in coffee and cigarettes." "I can use it on the street." To do what? Fill in more

blank spaces. Revealing admissions. A society poised and programmed to work. The brilliant spectrum of human potential filtered finally to plain production grey. Scuff the concrete floor with our Neoprene soles, waterproof, shock absorbent, protected, a routing to keep us away from our homes which are vacant and empty, but always so polished and swept. Work which is finally not essential, never a pleasure, done simply as a routine which has been, a tradition to be kept well-scrubbed, another secure wall behind which this macabre waste can continue. We don't know what to do with ourselves when we're not working. It is a fault of education, as we begin as malleable as putty.

I think the soldiers' beds are too wide. If they were thinner they could double as efficient coffins.

Then the high windows, out of reach, the glittering triple strand dance of concertina wire beyond. Cords to power, wires to bind, cuffs to hold. The worn soft red rubber lips of the hand sanding blocks mask the sharp hidden nails within. Sanding paper pierced and held to its task.

A tight embrace. Many skins rubbed off. Many surfaces sanded smooth. Many years filled in. Many lives used up.

John Abbott
Mission Prison

To a Prisoner About His 60 Minute a Month Telephone Baby

In fact your heart doesn't stop beating
when a sailor answers your call home
at the vanilla white phone, arm's length
from her soft satin pillows.

In fact, you don't have an "ol' lady"
: you don't own anyone.
The state owns you.

In fact imaginary lovers are not as warm
as the guy with the camaro at the bar she goes to
ditto: the ethereal image of your love
    is not
    as constant
    as your hand.

John Abbott
Mission Prison

REVIEWS

Claire Culhane. *Still Barred from Prison: Social Injustice in Canada.* Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1985.

This is not an entertaining book; it is positively sickening. Claire Culhane vividly sets before us the grotesque realities of life in Canada's "correctional" institutions. Certainly the cruel and destructive nonsense of prison life is real, but for most Canadians it is adequately masked by the bland assurances of our elected representatives and the mendacious flim-flam of prison officials. Culhane's book aims "to position the role of prisons in a violent society which responds with even more violence," to demonstrate that our prisons are definitive of the ways we deal with our poor, our unemployed and our minority groups. Prisons are destructive, not "correctional," and are radically opposed to democracy and the rule of law. We support them at our cost and our peril.

Too seldom do members of the "law abiding public" have a chance to glimpse the operation of Canada's prisons from the inside, and when they do it is generally in circumstances so tightly controlled for "security reasons" that little which is genuinely representative of prison life is visible. Claire Culhane has been an exception, though now she is barred from many prisons for reasons which, while never made explicit by those bureaucrats who imposed the ban, are easy enough to guess at from her books. Her accounts of torture, humiliation and obscenity are such as to arouse the most extreme disgust and anger.

We are taken on a brief excursion through Canada's better known places of "correction and rehabilitation," roughly covering a period from the mid-seventies to date. The vicious cycle of repression, violence, and further repression described by Culhane is repeated montonously over and over again. Frequently, she argues, both prisoners and administrators are well aware of rising frustration and desperation, with the attendant dangers of riot or hostage-taking; but not only do prison officers fail to take any step to relieve the situation, they do everything to negate the efforts of Inmate Committees, or concerned outsiders like Culhane, or prisoners' families. And so a riot occurs, or hostages are taken, and the administration can argue that these people, driven beyond tolerance, are in fact the "dangerously violent" specimens they have always claimed.

The resolution of such crises always involves enormous expense (lots of overtime for guards, often manoeuvers by the army) and excessive violence. Nevertheless, some concessions are usually wrung from angry bureaucrats, such as a media tour, a "public" inquiry, and "no reprisals." Inquiries almost always find fault with prison administration and make recommendations. The recommendations are almost always ignored.

At Oakalla, for example, a series of fasts and sit-ins drew attention to a number of abuses, some of which were verified by the Royal Commision of Inquiry, established in 1977. Fifty-seven recommendations were made, such as barring male staff from certain areas, and establishing meaningful educational and job-training programmes. These recommendations, like similar demands made earlier by prisoners, were mainly ignored. Another investigation "in response to an alarming number of reports of violent confrontations between guards and prisoners, of harsh and arbitrary use of discipline and a general atmosphere of tension and hostility" (quoted, p. 32) had the same lack of result.

In November of that year, to the surprise of no-one inside the prison, a "full-blown riot" broke out, with the usual damage to people and property. And following the riot, the reprisals. Culhane quotes an eye-witness:

> The handcuffs had been placed on ... very tightly .... Hands were numb and the handcuffs had actually cut right into the skin, drawing blood .... We were driven to the cow barns ... prodded inside ... guards with their clubs pushed in our backs, pushing, sticking, swinging up between our legs from behind .... Beatings could be heard, the cracks on the head sounding clearly as well as blows to the body.
>
> Bleeding... they were led to ... total isolation. Several guards went ... with them .... The next morning, they were taken to the hospital, shaking violently, and barely able to stand.
>
> *Solidarity Times,* November 30, 1983. Quoted, p. 32.

Culhane goes on:

> The subsequent investigation had prison officials denying the mistreatment with the usual burlesque variations of: ... no excessive use of force, only calm, well-trained staff dealing with a very tense situation without harming prisoners.
>
> Quoted, p. 33.

This is a sample of the dreary pattern described in the book in prison after prison. In the B.C. Penitentiary, for example, the Inmate Committee stated that "Every attempt made by the I.C. over the past two months [including] a letter-writing campaign with over a hundred letters [and] appeals and telegrams to Ottawa ... met with deaf ears." Having repeatedly warned the administration of the imminent danger of a serious incident, and given reasons for this situation, the I.C. understandably wanted to disclaim responsibility for the subsequent hostage-taking. The hostage was released unharmed after long negotiations, concluding with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement, defined as "the basis upon which the management of B.C. Penitentiary, the I.C. and the C.A.C. (Citizens' Advisory Committee, of which Culhane was a member) agreed to end the current situation within the penitentiary" (p. 43).

There were nine sections to the Agreement, several items to each section. The first two items concerned the immediate release of the hostage (Section 1) and the surrender of the prisoners with him to the R.C.M.P. (Section 2, item a). The rest of the agreement, concerning the treatment of prisoners and their effects, the fate of the I.C., transfer of prisoners, no reprisals or double jeopardy, and a Public Inquiry, were *all* violated by the authorities concerned, from the guards in contact with the prisoners, to the Commissioner himself. Within days of the Agreement being signed, the Commissioner declared in effect, that since the document was not legally binding, the Penitentiary Service could blithely ignore it if it suited them. And, of course, it did!

The pattern remains the same; the details change, or at any rate appear sometimes with greater clarity. At Archambault, following the killing of three guards, and a suicide pact between two prisoners, a number of reports were made. These reports uncovered shocking evidence of brutality by guards against inmates. Culhane can select no more than a sample, but it is all damningly familiar from prisoners' complaints elsewhere, when no American attorney from Washington (Attorney Charles E.M. Kolb) or prestigious Amnesty International representatives were allowed on the scene. The vicious use of tear gas; beatings; withdrawal of food, clean drinking water, and medical attention; prevention of prisoners communicating in any way with their lawyers; and, not least, disgusting little quirks of individual pathology, such as the guard who urinated on sandwiches, forced a prisoner to eat them, and compliment him on their flavour. The list could be endless, and is endlessly familiar.

These conditions were in violation of Canada's obligations under international law in the Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976, and the

Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, 1955; equally, they contravene the provisions of our own Constitution. This was pointed out by Amnesty International and by the Kolb Report. The United Church Report by Reverend MacDonald presented interviews with prisoners, in which behaviour of loathsome brutality is described: prisoners kept naked for weeks, repeatedly beaten and gassed, sprinkled with detergents and scouring cleansers and refused showers, sexually assaulted with batons, etc. Scandalous and cruel this appears to those, too few, who read these reports, but it is a story of frightening familiarity to prisoners who have experienced post-riot conditions. The Maleville Report confirmed the violations of the prisoners' "guaranteed rights," and pointed out the important contributing factor of the "incompressible sentences" the grotesque twenty-five year minimum, which replaced the death penalty.

All the reports made their recommendations. None of the recommendations has led to effective action. The Correction Investigator's Report was not tabled until two years after the event and informed a breathless public that, although something untoward was probably going on, because of the unfortunate disappearance of the relevant logs and reports and the generally amnesiac attitude of the security staff, all that could be said with certainty is that "at least one inmate was physically mistreated by officers either on escort or detention, causing him physical injuries ..." (quoted, p. 98). Again recommendations, rather weak ones, but in any case ignored.

Examples could be proliferated, but by now the cycle of repression and violence described by Claire Culhane, from her personal experience and from studiously researched documentation, must be evident enough. What, then, does she propose?

To accuse Culhane of bias in her books is utterly irrelevant. She declares, quite unequivocally, her belief that prisons are evil institutions which should be abolished, and goes on to make a reasoned, documented, and persuasive case for this belief. Even the most uninformed reader must begin to suspect that all is not well, and that a *genuinely* independent and public inquiry is the least that is called for. For an abolitionist like Claire Culhane, this is scarcely a beginning. However, while the descriptions of prison life engage our emotions, and undoubtedly aid our understanding of the situation, there is little in Culhane's book which is genuinely original, or which strikes a spark of hope that here is the solution. Her comparisons with the Dutch Criminal System, while suggestive (e.g., most institutions in Holland have a Supervisory Board of independent citizens to counterbalance the extreme powers of the Director), are not in the end very helpful. As Culhane points out herself, there are historical conditions specific to post-war Holland, which are not even approximated

in Canada. Moreover, one cannot help wondering whether the Dutch system would seem quite so attractive to the author had she the same "insider's" view of conditions and activities in their prisons as she has of Canada's.

Nor is one especially impressed by her list of "knowledgeable persons" who happen also to be abolitionists. One is referred to university symposia, to a former editor of *Jericho*, to the dust jacket of a book on British prisons, and to an Australian Prisoners' Action Group. Worthies all, no doubt, but less than convincing.

But this is not to say that Culhane is politically naive. She places the situation of Canada's prisons in the context of the expansion of state control generally, arguing in the tradition of Michel Foucault and E.P. Thompson. She recognizes the importance of the specific economic and political interests served by the status quo: e.g., CORCAN [Corrections Canada], industries, or the survival of elected officials. (Particularly sinister in this respect is the manufacture of parts for the Drone Rocket at Bowden.) Above all, and I believe quite rightly, she emphasizes the importance of popular ignorance, and the role in maintaining it played by the media, interested only in the "newsworthy," by self-interested prison officials, and by venal politicians with an eye on the elections.

There is an obvious ideological, as well as practical, importance to maintaining the cloak of invisibility if prisons are to be accepted as containers of the dangerous. In general, one is forced to rely on media reports for information on prison conditions, and necessarily the published reports emanate mainly from those in authority in the prisons themselves, or from the office of the Solicitor General. Most of the rest originates from "leaks," usually by guards, and tends to support the impression that prisons are too cushy by half, and offer many benefits denied the law-abiding citizen on the street. The press react with black glee to reports of erotic entertainment in prisons, as for example, the *Globe & Mail*, August 12, 1982. A poll conducted by the *Globe & Mail* following these reports produced the quite expected result that "majority opinion" is that prisons are far too comfortable. Thus the hot air off the presses blows dust in our eyes. Little enough which is informed and intelligent is written to redress this balance of ignorance, and Claire Culhane's contribution is welcome indeed.

Still Barred from Prison is the *cri de cœur* of an intelligent woman who is certain of her moral grounds and her final aim. She says nothing of shattering originality: "Penal institutions are a microcosm of the violent world which generates them." Nevertheless, the thing about truisms is that they are true; she may be forgiven their reiteration. Perhaps the most perceptive of her practical suggestions is constant call for public access, the end of secrecy and the devolution

of power to include input from community representatives—Community Prison Boards, Prisoner Liaison, Review Panels, and the like. This, she says, may take a "well-planned, sustained campaign," modelled after the women of Greenham Common in England, or other "acts of civil disobedience."

Alas, on the evidence of Claire Culhane's book itself, were such Panels and Boards established, their ability to function and the term of their survival would probably be mightily curtailed. The first step must, to be effective, have a longer stride than even Culhane envisages. Such constant scrutiny by public bodies, with some power of decision-making to counter the current bureaucratic despotism, has to be linked with the wider democratization of the executive in prisons—a democratization which *must include the prisoners themselves.*

Martin Shiels

Stephen Reid. *Jackrabbit Parole*. Toronto: Seal Books, 1986.

This is the story of bank robbers, the high life, the loss of same, betrayal and prison. It's a first novel by Steve Reid, himself a former bank robber, and now doing time. But the fact this is his first book only shows through periodically, because it's a fast-paced, slick thriller that keeps you going.

The narrator is Bobby Andersen, a smart-mouthed smoothy, who moves along from deal to deal with ease. Surrounding him in his adventures is a variety of characters that Reid puts down on the page with surety.

There is Emile, a huge French-Canadian, who has the look of "a barbarian chieftain arriving at the gates of a walled city .... His carry-on valise is the size of an ordinary person's suitcase ..." and "one pair of his socks was a big as an average sweater—the man needed some room."

His brother-in-law, Luc, is also a member of the gang. A poisonous wretch we hate at first, but before the end of the book he turns into something else. Emile is killed in a robbery shoot-out, and Luc ends up crippled and in jail. Two others in on the deal escape, and Luc is offered a medical parole if he'll name his accomplices. He refuses to do it.

Bobby's girlfriend Lou-Ann is the kind of girl you see in western bars, cowboy garb, and smart enough to get by, but not smart enough to guard her heart against men like Bobby. Tom-Tom is another too-slick friend who has his own troubles, and is "owned" by someone higher.

Near the beginning of the book as Reid eases us into his story and what's to come, there's Normie. Normie is "killed the following summer. A drunken mess in a twisted, smoking automobile. A death of ordinary dimensions. His funeral was awful ...."

Pals, guards, FBI, bystanders in the banks they rob—Reid nails them all down swift and sure.

It's a romantic book, but there is also the down-side. The cells, the guards, the razor wire, the too many cigarettes, and too much booze and coffee. They're on the move, eating in tired cafés, sleeping in motels, planning the next job, and waiting to execute it, so they can have that high, that rush. The life they live is on the edge, the adrenalin pumping, and that's what makes it worthwhile, but that passes away and they end up like Luc, crippled, or like Emile, shot dead on the pavement.

Love is taken where they can get it, standing up in a laundry room, or in motel units. Some of them hold steady for a time, and then fade

away. Because there's not much to hold onto with a jail-house visit, and a man facing a lifetime of bars. There's a scene where Bobby tells Lou-Ann that there isn't much hope for them. He's in for good, jailed in the USA and if by some miracle he ever gets out, Canada is waiting for him. His money and the high life are gone.

When she comes to visit him in prison, he thinks how " ... she'd gone from riding high in the desert to riding out in an old rattletrap of a bus to visit me at prison ...." She begs him to try and escape and come home. A sad scene follows, full of heartache for both of them.

There's also a prison killing in Marion while Bobby is there that makes your blood run cold. We realize too that this bank robber, slick operator though he is, has a very human side. No cold-hearted killer, he might shoot in the heat of the moment while under pressure, which he nearly does, but the highs of his life come from the planning, the execution, and the things the money taken can buy. He's disheartened by this cold-blooded killing of one man by five others.

Reid takes you along on the ride. He takes you into the bank and lets you feel the tension, lets you know how the best laid plans can so easily be fouled up. Even by something as inane as a bag of doughnuts. He shows how inside all of us, in the heat of the moment, there's the ability and possibility of murder. It's there.

Yet, even under pressure, he demonstrates also how there can be grace. When Bobby, his pal Denny, Emile, and Luc are robbing a bank, everyone's told to get on the floor. A fat lady whose skirt has ridden up when she got down is worried about this loss of dignity. It's bad enough to be told to lie on the floor after all. Surreptitiously, she tries to straighten the skirt without moving. She could get shot for it. Bobby sees her dilemma, and tugs down the skirt for her. Great stuff, and the book is full of things like this, little insights that ring so true, even if we've never been there ourselves.

Bobby, who was in Marion, and his friend Denny, who had been confined to Leavenworth, Kansas, are released to Canadian authorities, and put in prison in the cold and snow of Quebec. They escape from there, go out over the razor wire. They live loose for a time, but then are betrayed again.

I say again, because there are other betrayals in the book, all well done, in the sense that the reader never gets the complete picture, the same as the betrayed wouldn't. This act of betrayal towards the end of the book is a classic in execution.

Now Reid, like most of us the first time out, has a tendency to show off. It's the "hey-lookit-what-I-can-do-with-words" attitude. The ego is over-stuffed. Any of us who write have all been there. Most pass through it, though I can think of writers who haven't and probably never will. They're tiresome. Sometimes it pays off: "He was tried,

convicted, and doing twenty years before the state trooper's boot marks faded from his ass."

But the book is too slick in parts. And Reid can't help adding just a little bit more when he shouldn't have. When he gives us a scene that can break our hearts—and there are lots of them—he should let it. Shouldn't take away our suffering by being flippant in the next few sentences. A smart-ass gets too tiresome after a while. We need pauses and contrasts. And there aren't enough from the hard-boiled patter of his narrator.

However, I consider this a matter of style. This is his first book; it's going to take one or two more before the true Steve Reid style shows through. This man has talent, he knows how to tell a story, and it's obvious he knows how to drive it home. I read this book with much pleasure, and I'll wait for the next Steve Reid novel with anticipation.

D.M. Clark

James Q. Wilson and Richard J. Hernnstein. *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1985.

The new biological determinism in the field of criminology is tempting because it is disguised. We see appeals to data, to hard physiological evidence rather than to Lombrosian cultural biases. Is it, however, surprising that the data is compatible with these biases and seems to support them? We have gone beyond primitive theories of inheritance where, for example, criminals were thought to have an innate tendency to scar their skins (with tattoos being compared to ritual facial scarring of "savages." We no longer talk seriously about groups of people being less highly evolved than others, at least not in the old sense where the *Scala Naturae* was invoked to place members of the white male aristocracy closer to God while the rest of us were next to the apes. But we still hear about genetic predispositions, and we must ask: in the service of whom are these assertions made? Who wins and who loses in this latest game of science?

To place this new trend in some perspective it may be useful to briefly survey its recent roots and some of its more absurd growths, realizing that we are seeing a nicely trimmed version of the same phenomena today in books such Wilson and Hernnstein's *Crime and Human Nature*. After decades of behaviourist-inspired environmental determinism, E.O. Wilson gave the option of respectability to the opposing camps with his publication of *Sociobiology* in 1975. With the stated aim of consolidating branches of the social and life sciences, he in fact brought a few more members into his fold than he had anticipated. We suddenly learned, from the members of this new camp, that baby birds fling themselves out of the nest in a suicidal urge which would preserve resources for their siblings. A gene for suicide was not far from the genes already proposed by Wilson for aggression and altruism, and in fact might be considered a version of either. And the "aggression" gene, which sounded vaguely similar to the turn of the century "instinct" explanations (e.g., McDougall's "pugnacity" instinct to explain fighting), was supported in much the same manner: by behavioural evidence linked with statistics. Psychologists such as Jensen and Eysenck, who had suffered a credibility blow when Sir Cyril Burt's hereditarian I.Q. data was revealed as fraudulent, stepped quickly onto the firmer ground of respectable genetic theory.

Unfortunately, behavioural genetics tends to be done with smoke and mirrors (or with lineages, matrices, and chi-square analyses),

instead of research aimed at the discovery of mechanisms underlying the development of a behaviour from a genetic substance. A glance through many introductory genetics texts reveals the rather startling leap from ancestral observations and predictions to confident explanations of the genetic basis of a wide range of behaviours. These explanations might reasonably go unquestioned if one confined one's speculations to such phenonena as the strength of the mothering responses of a particular breed of livestock, but blithely walking into the multi-faceted world of human behaviour, with its infinite sources of variance, and offering a similar sort of explanation requires a particular kind of academic arrogance. Unfortunately, psychologists, who should know best about the difficulties of predicting and explaining human behaviour, sometimes take the geneticists at their word and confidently pass on inheritance myths.

It is difficult to winnow out the good from the bad criminological data of these times, and it is particularly difficult to pinpoint errors of reasoning in the conclusions reached. Some authors, such as Sarnoff Mednick, have publicly disgraced themselves in the eyes of their colleagues by flamboyant statements to the press. A particularly memorable musing, that psychopaths can be identified in early childhood and trained for high risk but socially useful jobs, was made by Sarnoff Mednick a few years ago and was quickly published by newspapers across North America. However, Mednick's data is not to be ignored: it is based both on the comprehensive genealogical data banks of Denmark and physiological research identifying a peculiar reaction pattern of the autonomic nervous system in psychopaths. His conclusions, however, if we can trace them back through the various nodal points of his reasoning seem to be that 1) criminality is psychopathy, 2) it is inherited, 3) it is present at birth and is identifiable by age two, and 4) it is untreatable. He has evidence for each of these points. However, we can ask if the final picture might not be somewhat skewed or even disarrayed. Mednick has discounted a number of factors, such as social causes, in the grand manner of the old I.Q. theorists. But more than this, he has reified a psychological construct and given us an inevitable end: what is biologically based will come to pass. Biology is destiny.

Mednick is considered somewhat extreme by his peers, but the arena of biological determinism is full of more palatable theories, of which *Crime and Human Nature* represents one version. As I noted at the beginning, we read this with interest and swallow it primarily because we, who were trained on nurture theories of behaviour, are put at ease when Wilson and Hernnstein state that "There is no 'crime gene' and so there is no such thing as a 'born criminal.'" We are then seduced by the following reasoning:

> First, certain human features that are indisputably biological—an individual's anatomical configuration—are correlated with criminality. We do not argue that these anatomical features cause crime, only that they are correlated with criminal behaviour. But the fact of their correlation indicates that there is *some* psychological trait, having a biological origin, that predisposes an individual to criminality. (p. 70)

What does this mean? Wilson and Hernnstein have simply hedged their bets: "anatomy doesn't cause crime but it predisposes people to develop traits that are criminal." This is simply probabilistic determinism, which is an improper interpretation of correlational data. If, for example, a muscular physique is correlated with aggressive crime, one can only say with confidence that the two tend to occur together. Muscularity can't be said to cause crime any more than crime can be said to cause muscularity: correlation does not imply causation; nor does it rule it out. Further data would have to be brought to bear to support the assertion of a biological predisposition to criminality.

More subtlely, we have to examine the concept of human nature itself. Wilson and Hernnstein piggy-back their arguments on the common assumption that the particular hue of one's nature can be discovered and analyzed. Thus, we see the reification of the concept of criminality: "Do you have it?" or "How much do you have?" rather than "What are you doing and why?" From the observable, we have moved to the hidden and applied complex analyses which permit us to believe that this "thing" (criminality/psychopathy) can be known in all of its dimensions. We have to remember, however, that the only real data is at the level of the overt, and it is mere speculation to go further.

Perhaps the rankest error is the most common one when social scientists try to grapple with the origins of behaviour: partititioning of variance into genetic and environmental causes. This is a direct legacy of behavioural genetics which seeks to predict (rather than explain) behaviour. Wilson and Hernnstein state that criminal behaviour, like all human behaviour, results from a complex interaction of genetic and environmental factors. But they don't answer that basic "how" question. In fact, they don't even look at the "how" very closely. Instead, they head in another direction: "Our knowledge of this interaction is not yet good enough to permit anyone to say with confidence how much of the variation in the law-violating behaviour of people can be attributed to genetic and how much to environmental factors" (p. 70). Dividing the variance up into nature and nurture

components only makes sense in the controlled laboratory, and then it only allows accurate prediction of traits when all the controls are on. For example, I can explain the presence of two eyes in a species of fish by referring to inheritance: this trait is 100 percent genetic. I can state this confidently. However, if my laboratory partner drops some manganese into the solution where the fish eggs are developing and the fish hatch with three eyes, what do I say? "This trait is 100 percent genetic." And it is! But it's also completely dependent upon a particular environment. Shall I double the confusion and say it is also 100 percent environmental?

The flaw in the genetics vs. environment analysis rests in the interdependence of the terms. Any explanation which hinges on separating genetic influences from environmental ones is essentially confused because neither operates on the developing individual independently of the other. DNA obviously requires a substrate within which to operate, and this substrate is influenced by all sorts of environmental factors (nutrition, radiation, enzymes, heat, etc.). To suggest that a behaviour is genetically based, as if genetic action occurs independently of an environment and its causal forces, is simply scientific mysticism.

In reading *Crime and Human Nature,* the reader is likely to be left with a feeling of irritation. While a great deal of research is presented, conclusions run along the following non-conclusive lines: "circumstances that activate criminal behaviour in one person will not do so in another"; "social forces cannot deter criminal behaviour in 100 percent of a population" (p. 103); and "crime cannot be understood without taking into account individual predispositions and their biological roots" (p. 103). But where is the understanding? We are given descriptive data which camouflages the lack of real explanations.

Crime is dynamic and historical. Snapshots of muscles, stupidity and poverty are not adequate to explain the development of criminal behaviour; they only give us a demography. Biological determinists appease the mentally lazy with promises of a static universe. They would have us believe that attempts to discover the origin of genetic factors (e.g., *why* there are nervous system peculiarities) are unnecessary and overly complicated. For them, it is sufficient to measure and predict. Indeed, it *is* sufficient if such traits are fixed and outside the scope of human influence. However, we know that such is not the case. Evolution is not something that happens to us; it is a process in which we participate. If we want to, we can move to Baffin Island without parkas, die of hypothermia, and leave behind a more sensible gene pool. Similarly, biological "determinants" of behaviour need to be considered as factors open to influence as well,

factors with discoverable origins and plasticity. That is the error of *Crime and Human Nature:* the question of the fixity of human nature is not addressed, yet by avoiding this basic issue it appears to have been answered.

Jacquelyn Nelson